



ELIZABETH THE SECOND,  
*by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom, Australia and her  
other realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth,  
Defender of the Faith*

*The gold Armills worn by the Queen at her Coronation  
were "symbols and pledges of that bond which unites her with  
her Peoples." Their restoration to the ceremony after four  
hundred years was suggested by the Prime Minister of Australia*

# THE SUNBURNT COUNTRY

*PROFILE OF AUSTRALIA*

*Edited by*

IAN BEVAN

*With an Introduction by*

GILBERT MURRAY, O.M.

THE TRAVEL BOOK CLUB

121 CHARING CROSS ROAD,  
LONDON, W.C.2

FIRST PUBLISHED 1954  
THIS EDITION 1955

*H.M. The Queen has graciously accepted "The Sunburnt Country" which has been especially written by The Society of Australian Writers in Great Britain as a tribute, combined with the thought that the book would be helpful for Her Majesty and The Duke of Edinburgh on their tour through Australia.*

*The proceeds of this book will be given to charities in Great Britain and Australia, to be chosen by The Duke of Edinburgh.*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
COLLINS CLEAR-TYPE PRESS: LONDON AND GLASGOW

*I love a sunburnt country,  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of ragged mountain ranges,  
Of droughts and flooding rains.  
I love her far horizons,  
I love her jewel-sea,  
Her beauty and her terror—  
The wide brown land for me!*

*from MY COUNTRY  
by Dorothea Mackellar*





# Contents

INTRODUCTION <i>by Gilbert Murray</i>	page 11
---------------------------------------	---------

## A NEW NATION

I AUSTRALIA'S EXPANDING HORIZON <i>by Chester Wilmot</i>	16
II ORIGINS AND LEGENDS <i>by Ian Grey</i>	34

## THE LANDSCAPE

I AS MOST PEOPLE SEE IT <i>by Colin Wills</i>	56
II AS FEW PEOPLE SEE IT <i>by Jack McLaren</i>	70
III AS MAN HAS MADE IT <i>by Paul Brickhill</i>	84
IV AS NATURE LEFT IT <i>by Mary Elwyn Patchett</i>	102

## THE PEOPLE

I THE AUSTRALIAN SERVICEMAN <i>by Russell Braddon</i>	120
II THE AUSTRALIAN WOMAN <i>by Judy Fallon</i>	136
III THEIR WAY OF LIFE <i>by George H. Johnston</i>	148
IV THEIR SPORTS <i>by Rex Rienits and J. H. Fingleton</i>	160
V THEIR ART <i>by Colin MacInnes</i>	182
VI THEIR BOOKS <i>by Dal Stevens</i>	194
VII THEIR LANGUAGE <i>by Eric Partridge</i>	212
VIII THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS ABROAD <i>by Alan Wood</i>	224
IX THEIR LINK WITH BRITAIN <i>by Martin Boyd</i>	238
INDEX	249



## *Illustrations*

H.M. QUEEN ELIZABETH II	<i>frontispiece</i>
"SHEEP MADE AUSTRALIA RICH" ( <i>Frank Hurley</i> )	<i>facing page 16</i>
JOHN MACARTHUR'S HOME AT CAMDEN PARK, N.S.W. ( <i>Alec Murray</i> )	17
CONVICT CHURCH AT PORT ARTHUR, TASMANIA ( <i>Frank Hurley</i> )	17
MEN OF THE OUTBACK ( <i>David Potts</i> )	36
FEDERAL PARLIAMENT HOUSE ( <i>Frank Hurley</i> )	37
GENERAL VIEW OF CANBERRA ( <i>Frank Hurley</i> )	37
SYDNEY ( <i>Laurence Le Guay</i> )	44
ADELAIDE ( <i>Official Photo from the South Australian Government</i> )	45
AUSTRALIAN SUBURBAN HOUSING ( <i>Official Photo from the South Australian Government</i> )	45
A DROVER, A COOK AND HIS DOGS ( <i>The Australian News and Information Bureau</i> )	64
LARGE SCALE MECHANISED FARMING ( <i>Frank Hurley</i> )	64
AN ABORIGINAL OF THE OOLDEA TRIBE ( <i>Ealing Studios</i> )	65
PRIMITIVE COUNTRY ( <i>Australian National Publicity Association</i> )	80
PRIMITIVE PEOPLE ( <i>Australian National Publicity Association</i> )	81
THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN AIR MAIL ( <i>Qantas Empire Airways</i> )	96
THE AIRPORT AT DARWIN ( <i>Qantas Empire Airways</i> )	96
"OLD MAN KANGAROO" ( <i>Australian National Publicity Association</i> )	97
"THE SPIRIT OF THE BUSH" ( <i>Max Dupain</i> )	112

## Illustrations

COUNTRY TOWN ( <i>Max Dupain</i> )	<i>facing page</i> 113
DIGGERS IN KOREA ( <i>The Australian News and Information Bureau</i> )	128
DIGGERS IN LONDON ( <i>David Potts</i> )	129
SIR DONALD BRADMAN IN ACTION ( <i>The Daily Mirror, Australia</i> )	144
AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL ( <i>The Australian News and Information Bureau</i> )	145
THE THRILLS OF SURFING ( <i>Ray Leighton</i> )	145
A. SHARK-PROOF OCEAN POOL ( <i>The Australian News and Information Bureau</i> )	160
AUSTRALIAN RACE TRACK ( <i>The Australian News and Information Bureau</i> )	160
BARRIER REEF ISLANDS ( <i>Queensland Railways</i> )	161
ROUNDING UP WILD HORSES ( <i>The Australian News and Information Bureau</i> )	161
OPEN CUT GOLD MINE AT MOUNT MORGAN ( <i>Frank Hurley</i> )	176
THE KARRI FOREST OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA ( <i>Max Dupain</i> )	177
A TYPICAL AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY SCENE ( <i>Max Dupain</i> )	196
BRISBANE IN SUMMER ( <i>Steven Henty</i> )	197
THE HUME WEIR ( <i>Australian National Publicity Association</i> )	204
THE EFFECTS OF DROUGHT ( <i>Laurence Le Guay</i> )	204
THE TRANS-AUSTRALIAN RAILWAY ( <i>Camera Press</i> )	205
MELBOURNE ( <i>Frank Hurley</i> )	224
CATTLE COUNTRY IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY ( <i>Ealing Studios</i> )	225
CATTLE TOWN IN NEW SOUTH WALES ( <i>The Australian News and Information Bureau</i> )	225
PERTH ( <i>The Australian News and Information Bureau</i> )	240
HOBART ( <i>Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau</i> )	240
AUSTRALIA'S EASTERN COASTLINE ( <i>David Moore</i> )	241

*Jacket and endpapers designed by Loudon Sainthill*

# INTRODUCTION

BY PROFESSOR GILBERT MURRAY, O.M.,  
*President of The Society of Australian Writers*

THE AUSTRALIAN WRITERS in Britain feel a great pang of disappointment and almost of shame to think that, just when the two people in the world whom they would most wish to welcome are visiting Australia, they are away from home and can take no part in the reception. A royal welcome it will be, and they would dearly like to make some little contribution to it. They cannot be present; they have nothing to give except their writings; so they venture to present to the Queen for Her Majesty's gracious acceptance the homage of this volume.

Australia is much nearer to Britain now than it was when I first made the voyage. In a fast P. & O. steamer at that time it took eight weeks. But it had taken my father three months: and a little after his time a mail ship in the Pacific had been attacked by pirates, an interruption which we do not now have to guard against. Steam and oil and the internal combustion engine have altered all that. But a far greater influence in bringing Australia nearer to her mother country has been the wireless telephone and its magical transmission of the human voice.

Certain messages from London to Australia stand out in my memory, partly because of their effect on my own feelings, partly because of the emotion they stirred in friends and relations of mine on the other side.

First, I remember a spoken greeting from H.M. King George V to the children of his Empire. It seemed like a fairy story. I was told afterwards how some children in Sydney had listened with tears in their eyes, as I confess there had been in mine. Another great moment was when a bomb had recently struck Buckingham Palace; we were all anxious for the King's safety and took for granted that the royal family had moved to some safer place. Her Majesty's father, George VI, sent out a reassuring message. It came in his slow, calm, considerate tones: "I am speaking from Buckingham Palace . . ." and a thrill went through all the Free World.

The third occasion was quite recent, when after an hour or more of

## *Introduction*

voices from all quarters of the earth, all expressing loyalty and trust, some speaking of the fearful disasters that had fallen upon the world and some of the help which our great Commonwealth had tried to bring to the sufferers, at last there came that young, courageous voice, unforgettable, responsive to the world-wide call, conscious of the vast burden of responsibility and asking for our prayers to help our Queen. What multitudes, hearing it, in the Commonwealth and beyond it, even of those who seldom pray, must have resolved that in that prayer at least they must join.

Yes, Australia and New Zealand are now in real unity with the mother country. It is a relation which other nations sometimes find it hard to understand. In the first world war a friendly Swede in Stockholm once asked me how England made the Anzac regiments play their part in the war. He understood that the British C-in-C could send the order, but how could he "make them really come?" I remember about the same time, an American put it to me that surely after the splendid way in which the Anzacs had behaved, England might now "set Australia free." People do find our Empire—or Commonwealth, or whatever it is—difficult to understand.

It was not always like this. In the sixties and seventies of last century it was generally assumed that the obvious future for all free colonies was sooner or later to separate from the mother country, and go each his own way. The regular phrase, when I was a small boy in Sydney, was to talk of "cutting the painter." In my family such talk was highly disapproved of; it was disloyal; but now it would be mere folly.

By now people have learnt to dread the thought of isolation. Nations which had no previous connection are eagerly seeking to unite, to confederate, to agree on common policies and mutual defence. But, apart from all such considerations of mere self-interest, the common loyalty and unity of the Commonwealth is now a thing of the heart, growing naturally by our many bonds of closeness and friendship, and made almost imperative by our common ideals and our common danger.

Yet, unless my memory deceives me, though there was at that time not much talk about the Empire or about "common policies with the English-speaking world," there was a widespread personal attachment to Queen Victoria: a great feeling that she was not only a great Queen, she was a kind and good one; a conviction, when things were wrong or unjust, that they would soon be put right if the Queen knew.

Sir Arthur Grimble has told how in one of his Polynesian islands

## *Introduction*

two hostile tribes were practically exterminating one another when the captain of a British gunboat decided that the massacres must be stopped, and took possession of the island in the name of Queen Victoria. The fighting ceased. Both parties were greatly relieved; though of course the stronger side continued to say that if the war had gone on it knew who would have won. But there was a general conclusion that the secret of the matter simply was that "Queen Victoria was a kind woman" and did not allow her people to suffer. And, after all, if a little simplified, is not that the truth of the matter?

The simple people of the Pacific did not think of parliaments or constitutions, or even very much of laws; they thought of Queen Victoria. When a band of Maoris, defeated with difficulty in New Zealand, went off to Chatham Island and threatened to "eat" the large unwarlike inhabitants, they were warned that Queen Victoria would not allow it.

I can just remember seeing Thakumbau, the last King of Fiji, a man with a rather epic or heroic history. When a boy, he had seen his tribe conquered by a rival tribe and his native town, Mbau, made into his enemies' capital. He took a vow that he would bear no name till he was avenged; he continued a homeless and nameless man. But meantime he was gathering his forces, and on one great night he launched an attack with the war-cry "Thaku-Mbau," meaning "Mbau is bad" or "destroyed." The attack was successful, and he adopted that war-cry as his name.

He was, I believe, according to his lights a very good king, but towards the end of his life he was anxious about the future. He could not see any competent ruler to follow him: so, on thinking things over, he made his kingdom a personal present to Queen Victoria. I was a child at the time, and it seemed to me, as it did to Thakumbau, quite the natural and obvious way of describing his action, though of course the grown-up white people preferred putting it in complicated and unintelligible language.

Thakumbau was not the only aboriginal of the Pacific world of whom I have memories. The Australian blacks had a great protector in my father, as afterwards in my brother, for so many years governor of Papua. They needed protection for many reasons, but chiefly because they found it so hard to understand that sheep might be private property and were not to be speared as freely as kangaroos. My father used to say he would, in general, sooner trust the promise of a black than of a white man, and believed that the blacks had more latent talent than was



## *Introduction*

recognised. For instance, the acute sense of perception which enabled them to see traces of animals and other marks to us invisible, and to judge distances and changes of weather, partly explains the very remarkable landscape drawings done recently by black boys in their early teens; then, the fact that most tribes have to know the languages of two or three of the neighbouring tribes is significant. A black whom my father took with him to the Paris Exhibition of 1855 confounded his white companions by the rapidity with which he understood French. Of late years there has been more appreciation of the possibilities in these stone-age people. The past history of our treatment of them is a thing which most Australians do not like to think about, and are only at the eleventh hour beginning effectively to correct.

However these memories of mine come from seventy years back, and all that was about eighty years ago; and eighty years in Australia bring more change and growth than a hundred and sixty years in England or Europe. Even in physical things the change is immense. I think of the lovely harbour of Sydney, the delight of bathing in the Pacific rollers on the farther beach at Manly or Bondi, or even inside the harbour when you have looked to see there are no sharks about; I think of the trees of untouched forest growing down to the water's edge in Middle Harbour; and then people tell me about the magnificent Harbour Bridge, of the streets and houses that now reach down to the sea and supplant the forest, and I begin to wonder if I should know the old places again.

Greater still, perhaps, are the social and political changes; the remarkable growth of art and literature and, of course science; the high standard in the universities; the new Federal Capital, Canberra, standing on what was once wild bush on my father's station, Yarralumla.

Another great change, as I said before, will be the nearness of Australia to Great Britain both in time and in feeling, and the conscious and deeply felt unity of the Commonwealth. And one thing quite unchanged will, I am sure, be the warm personal devotion and trust to the young Queen who now sits on Victoria's throne and inherits her greatness, but has come nearer to Australia than Queen Victoria could ever come. The Society of Australian Writers in this country beg to send their most loyal and loving greetings to our gracious Queen and her gallant and gifted husband.

*Gilbert Murray*

## A NEW NATION I

---

*Australia is a large country with a small population, far from the rest of the world. No one goes there by chance, for it is not on the way to anywhere else. Transient millions have seen the scruffy streets of Port Said and shopped at Simon Artz's, but few except Australians have seen the great city of Melbourne and shopped at Myer's.*

*This land has no mystery to lure tourists; no distinctive native dress except the wide-brimmed felt hat; no quaint customs except those resulting from the licensing laws. It cannot compare with Canada or Capri as a setting for musical comedy or a source of picture postcards. History books give it scant attention for it has very little recorded past, but we who love our own country believe it has a tremendous future.*

*We think of it as a wide-open land; wide open for adventure, construction, development; wide open for living. We think of it as a wonderful place—not perfect, but wonderful; and this is an attempt to portray the imperfections and the wonder in a way which will inform those who have never thought about Australia at all, and perhaps challenge those who think about it to the exclusion of all else.*

*We have called our book a profile, intending this as a warning not to look for a definitive portrait but an outline sketch, something which we hope will enable a stranger to recognise the subject without further introduction if they ever meet in person, and something which may show the friend or relative a new aspect of a familiar face. As in all sketches, a lot of details have been blithely left out and others, in which the artist happens to be particularly interested, put in with almost superfluous care.*

*First of all there is the background against which the profile must be viewed. The author of *The Struggle for Europe* considers the place that Australia occupies in the world to-day—the place given it by geography as a Pacific power, and by history as a member of the British Commonwealth.*

# *Australia's Expanding Horizon*

CHESTER WILMOT

IN TERMS of historical geography Australia is an island off the coast of Asia, a western outpost in an eastern sea. The nearest stronghold of western power, the United States, lies six thousand miles away across the Pacific Ocean, but between Australia and Asia there is no stretch of unbroken water wider than a hundred miles. In an age of air power the two thousand miles of island-studded sea that separates the Australian continent from the Asian mainland is narrower militarily than was the English Channel fifty years ago. This physical relationship to Asia is the dominant geographical factor in the Australian approach to world events, and it leads to a significant difference in perspective. From the standpoint of Europe, South-East Asia lies in the "Far East"; to the Australian it is in the "Near North." And recent history has made him aware how near it is.

The annihilation of distance in the last half century and the expansion of local conflicts between nations into a global struggle between world powers has destroyed the comfortable isolation in which Australia grew up. In the last seven years this struggle has become more clearly defined, broader and deeper in its impact. Moreover, it has taken on an ideological character so marked that, although temporary accommodations may be made between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. from time to time, neither seems to see any hope of ultimate security except in the universal triumph of its own doctrines.

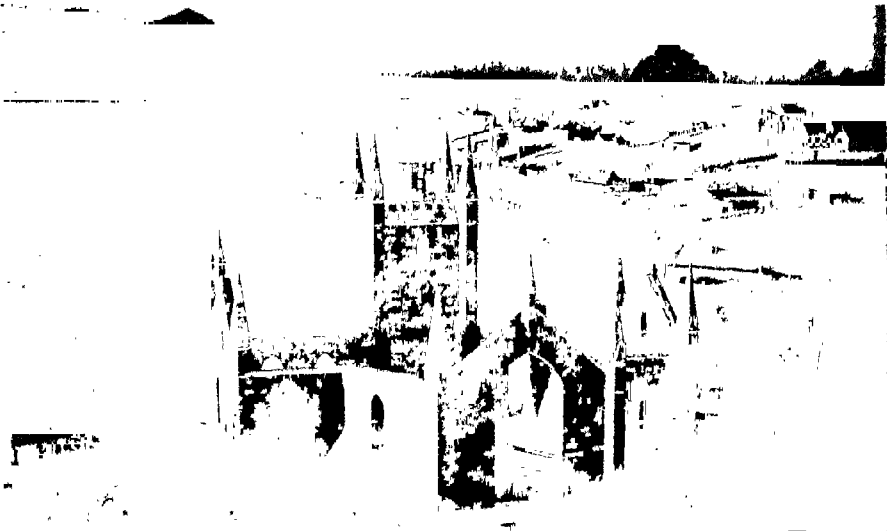
This development is of direct significance to Australia, since the centre of gravity of the world conflict has shifted from Europe to Asia. Thwarted for the moment in Western Europe by the creation of the North Atlantic Alliance and encouraged by the triumph of Communism in China, the Soviet Union has naturally turned to South-East Asia, seeing there the opportunity both to gain new adherents to the Communist cause and to deny great natural riches to the Western Allies.



*SHEEP made Australia rich, and keep her so*



*NOSTALGIA of the first settlers for England is shown in early buildings such as John MacArthur's home at "Camden Park" (Above) and the convict designed church at Port Arthur, Tasmania built in 1836*



## *Australia's Expanding Horizon*

Once already Asian nationalism, as represented by Japan, has gravely threatened Australian security, but Asian nationalism, reinforced by the moral and material resources of Communist Russia and Communist China, presents an infinitely greater threat. It may be argued that this threat is remote, in point of time if not of space, but it took Japan only one generation to advance from feudalism and isolation to industrialism and aggression, and barely two generations to amass the means of challenging, and inflicting severe defeats upon, American and British power in the Pacific.

Australia's participation in the First and Second World Wars was an act of choice—and one that was by no means unanimous—but her concern in the present conflict is a matter of necessity. The security once afforded by geographical isolation and the protection of the British fleet is gone. At the same time the turn of events in Asia has created on Australia's northern doorstep one of the main battlezones of the Cold War. Since 1945, therefore, Australia has been obliged to reconsider and revise certain of the policies which she has cherished and maintained since the foundation of the Commonwealth in 1901.

On the first day of the twentieth century, when the Commonwealth of Australia came into being, the first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, expressed the aspirations of his fellow-countrymen by claiming "A Continent for a Nation and a Nation for a Continent." To Barton and his contemporaries that phrase conveyed their determination to maintain as the foundations of Australian security the territorial integrity of the continent and the racial homogeneity of the nation, then 95 per cent British and 99 per cent white. These twin objectives reflected both the hopes and fears of a community of fewer than four millions inhabiting three million square miles in close proximity to the over-crowded lands of an awakening Asia. When these principles were expressed in practical policies, they took the form of a demand that not only the continent but also the island barrier to the north-east should be under Australian or British control, and that the mainland should be exclusively reserved for white settlement.

These policies were neither new nor surprising. In a country where men may ride a thousand miles to take cattle to market, little reliance is placed on distance as a guarantor of security, and Australia's very isolation made her people doubly sensitive to the presence anywhere in the South Pacific of any power not entirely friendly. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century the Australian colonies had repeatedly

## *A New Nation*

urged the British Government to annex New Guinea and the nearby islands in order to safeguard them against "bad neighbours"; and in 1883, when Germany established settlements on the northern coasts of New Guinea, the Queensland Government on its own initiative planted the British flag on the southern shore, thereby claiming Papua for the Crown and giving Australia for the first time an international frontier other than the sea.

Similarly, as early as the 1850's the individual colonies had taken action to exclude Chinese and other non-Europeans in the interests of "racial purity" and in defence of "the white man's standard of living." By the end of the century there was an almost universal demand for the imposition and enforcement of a strict "White Australia" policy as the first step towards the establishment of the new nation. "The unity of Australia is nothing," said Alfred Deakin, the second Prime Minister, "if it does not imply a united race," and that, he explained, "means not only that its members can intermarry and associate without degradation on either side, but implies . . . a people possessing the same general cast of character, tone of thought, the same constitutional training and traditions."

Although resented by certain of Australia's neighbours, this exclusive policy was never directly challenged until the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, when Japan tried to persuade the Allied Governments to endorse in the Covenant of the League of Nations the principle of "racial equality." By refusing to do this, the Allies in effect upheld the "White Australia" policy, but it remained a source of friction with Japan.

This conference also determined the immediate future of the former German colonies in the Pacific which had been causing Australians such anxiety for a generation. At Versailles, the Australian Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, claimed that, since Australia had "fought for the safety of the world," at the cost of 60,000 Australian lives, "the world should at least see to it that those islands which lay like a rampart along our coast should not be in the hands of an actual or potential enemy." Hughes wanted to annex the former German colonies, but he had to be content with securing jurisdiction—by mandate from the League—over German New Guinea and the neighbouring islands of the Bismarck Archipelago. The mandate over Germany's Pacific colonies north of the equator was entrusted to Japan—a decision which, so Australians feared, brought the thrusting Japanese too near. On his return home, therefore, Hughes proclaimed what was in effect an Australian Monroe Doctrine for the South Pacific.

## *Australia's Expanding Horizon*

Having played their part in winning "the war to end war" and in establishing the League of Nations to preserve the peace, and having also gained international acceptance of the two policies most relevant to their external security, the Australian people were inclined to retreat from the sphere of world politics, to relapse into isolation and to concentrate on their own social and economic development. Before 1914 Australian nationalism had been more concerned with unity than with independence, but in the post-war years there were many—especially in the Labour Party—who were impatient to acquire full sovereignty, though not to the extent of severing the constitutional ties with Britain.

This movement might have made considerable progress if Britain had not been sensitive to the aspirations of the Dominions. At Versailles, as Hughes had reported, "the right of the self-governing parts of the Empire to an effective voice in foreign affairs, recognised by Britain during the war, was fully exercised"; and, when the League of Nations was created, Australia became a member in her own right. Moreover, the Balfour Declaration of 1926 established the principle—subsequently embodied in the Statute of Westminster—that Great Britain and the Dominions were "autonomous communities, equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations." Since this was the end of any constitutional subordination, even the Irish Catholics—the most powerful element in the Australian Labour Party and traditionally anti-British—were now less eager to assert Australia's independence.

Economic nationalism, on the other hand, continued to exert a strong influence on Australia's policy in ways which directly affected her outlook in the world. The two main parties—Labour and Nationalist—both advocated the rapid development of secondary industries behind a high tariff wall in order to create a more balanced economy in the interests of defence and of the Australian standard of living. From Britain's point of view there were obvious advantages in having the Australian economy based almost entirely on the export of primary products and the import of manufactured goods, since that meant cheap food and sure markets. For Australia, however, it meant that her prosperity would be governed not only by the fluctuations of the world market, as in the slump of 1893, but also by the considerable seasonal variations of her own climate, as in the drought of 1901-2. Within her Protectionist policy Australia found room for the doctrine of Imperial Preference,



## *A New Nation*

but this merely gave the British or Canadian manufacturer preference over his foreign rival; the Australian manufacturer was still protected against both. As a further safeguard the Labour Party also advocated the restriction of immigration, lest the influx of new workers—and especially Southern Europeans content with a lower standard of living than was the average Australian—should undermine the security of those already employed.

The development of secondary industries, which went ahead apace between the wars, was a reflection of the Australian desire for greater economic independence. This desire was strengthened in 1930—at the start of the great depression—when the Bank of England sent one of its governors, Sir Otto Niemeyer, to “consult” the Commonwealth Government about the financial crisis then developing as a result of the sharp fall in world prices for wool and wheat and the reluctance of the London money market to finance further Australian loans. The Niemeyer Mission caused resentment far beyond the Labour Party, for national pride was wounded by the inference, which Australians were quick to draw, that the Bank of England was ‘putting in a receiver.’ Sir Otto’s conclusion—that Australia had been living beyond her means and must adopt a policy of deflation and wage reductions—was unpalatable, though in fact it was imposed by resolute governmental action, even on the part of Labour administrations. Among the rank and file of the Labour Party, however, the impression remained that Australia had been compelled to bow to economic dictation from London, and this brought increasing support in Labour circles for the view that Australia’s future lay in political isolation behind the bulwark of Protection.

Although the depression proved how wise successive governments had been to maintain Protection, it served as a sharp reminder to the Australian people that, short of making themselves self-sufficient and accepting a reduced standard of living, they could not insulate their economy from the shock of world events, and that their best hope of recovery lay in developing yet closer economic ties with Britain and their fellow Dominions. That process, exemplified in the Ottawa Imperial Preference Agreements of 1932, continued throughout the thirties, to the particular annoyance of the Japanese and the Americans who suffered in consequence; and, as the world moved nearer to war, it became steadily more apparent that Australia could find security neither in isolation nor in international action through the League. The mass of Australians continued to presume, however, that their country would

### *Australia's Expanding Horizon*

be protected, as before, by the broad shield of Britain and when war came they volunteered in thousands for service overseas.

In the First World War the essence of Australia's defence policy had been that, since the Royal Navy—reinforced in the Pacific by ships of the Royal Australian Navy—would retain command of the seas and guarantee Australia's local security, the Commonwealth could afford to send almost its entire army to fight in Europe and the Middle East, thereby repaying Britain for having borne the main burden of Imperial defence throughout the years of peace.

In that war the Pacific had presented no military problem, for Japan was Britain's ally, but this relationship did not continue, and after 1931, when the Japanese initiated their aggressive policy against China, Australia became increasingly alarmed. The response from London, however, was an assurance that, in the event of any threat developing to the Pacific Dominions, a powerful battle fleet would be sent at once to the newly-built naval base at Singapore, whence it would safeguard the ocean approaches to Australia and New Zealand. At the Imperial Conference of 1937 this assurance was accepted with some misgivings, but the Australian Government nevertheless based its defence plans on the assumptions that the British fleet would maintain command of the South Pacific and that, provided Japan did not openly intervene in the event of a war between Germany and the Western Allies, Australia could again safely send an expeditionary force to Europe.

These assumptions were challenged by the leader of the Labour Opposition (John Curtin) who argued, with strong support from certain sections of Australian military opinion, that Japan would not attack until Britain was heavily engaged in Europe and that it might not then be possible for a British fleet to reach Singapore in time to prevent its capture. Curtin contended, therefore, that Australia should concentrate on building up her air force for defence against invasion, and should not undertake to raise a large army for service abroad.

In the event Curtin's appreciation proved to be correct. In December 1941, when Japan attacked, there were only two British battleships at Singapore and these, lacking adequate air cover, were promptly sunk. This disaster coming hard upon the crippling of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour, opened the sea routes to Australia at a time when three of the four trained and equipped Australian divisions were in the Middle East and the other was trapped in Malaya.

These developments had a profound psychological impact upon

## *A New Nation*

Australia, for the Japanese menace, which the British Government had accused Curtin of exaggerating, had proved greater than his most gloomy predictions. The consequent crisis revived and exacerbated the internal conflict between those who in two world wars had made Britain's cause their own and those who had twice opposed Australia's active participation in the European war. This conflict had its roots in the past and cast its shadow into the future. The immediate question was Australia's security, but the long-term issue at stake was her relationship with Britain and the Commonwealth.

For generations those Australians whose nationalism had inclined them to act independently of Britain in foreign policy, had been answered by the argument that, quite apart from considerations of blood and heritage, Australia could not afford to do so, since this would weaken her right to call upon the Royal Navy for protection. But now—for whatever good reason—that protection had not been provided, though Australia had played her part once more by sending her army abroad. Moreover, Australia had been placed in danger, so it seemed, not by the Labour Party, for all its traditional isolationism and incipient pacifism, but by the action—in part at least—of those Australians who were the most loyal supporters of the British Commonwealth and had encouraged the nation to identify its fortunes with Britain's. How easy it was for the less responsible elements in the Labour Party to claim that the Menzies Government which had sent the A.I.F. to Britain's aid had played Australia false!

This was the emotional atmosphere—highly charged with recrimination and reproach—when on December 27, 1941, John Curtin, who had now become Prime Minister, published in a Melbourne newspaper a signed article in which he said:

The Australian Government regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the democracies' fighting plan.

Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links with the United Kingdom.

We know the problems that the United Kingdom faces. We know the constant danger of invasion. . . . But we know too that Australia can go and Britain still hold on.

We are therefore determined that Australia shall not go, and we shall exert all our energies towards the shaping of a plan, with the

## *Australia's Expanding Horizon*

United States as its keystone, which will give our country some confidence of being able to hold out until the tide of battle swings against the enemy.

This forthright declaration was seized upon by enemy propagandists as evidence that the Commonwealth was breaking up under the stress of war, and it caused considerable embarrassment to the British Prime Minister (Mr. Churchill) who was then in Washington for the very purpose of conferring with President Roosevelt about the crisis created by Japan's aggression. What distressed Churchill most was the unwarranted imputation that Britain had so little regard for Australia's safety that it was necessary for Curtin to make a public and independent approach to America.

Acting in her own interests as well as Australia's, the United States responded generously to this appeal, and American naval victories soon removed the threat of Japanese invasion. But it was unfortunate that so many of the troops who came to Australia under General MacArthur's command appeared to think that they were coming to the aid of a people needing not only protection from the Japanese but also liberation from the British yoke. Australians were surprised and annoyed by the unwitting impertinence of some of their allies who, ignorant of the development and character of the British Commonwealth, kept assuring them that when the war was over the United States would see that Australia gained her independence.

By the war's end, the United States had earned Australia's sincere and lasting gratitude, but when the first Americans arrived they were inclined to be patronising until common experience in New Guinea made them appreciate the Australian soldier's military prowess. Some friction was inevitable, since the Australians, by virtue of their geographical isolation, had had little experience of other people's ways, but the situation—in government and military circles—was not made easier by the attitude of General Douglas MacArthur. An imperious character, aggressively autocratic, MacArthur behaved as if he had been sent out as American Pro-consul, not as Allied Supreme Commander.

The American "occupation" made Australians the more appreciative of their association with Britain and the Commonwealth, and this was soon reflected in official policy. In January, 1944, Australia and New Zealand concluded an Anzac Pact which provided for the regional defence of the South Pacific and contained a declaration that the wartime use by one power of the territory of another did not provide a basis for

## *A New Nation*

post-war territorial claims. This was clearly intended to forestall any attempt by the Americans to retain military bases they had built in Pacific islands which were under the jurisdiction of Australia or New Zealand. Four months later, when the Commonwealth Prime Ministers met in London, John Curtin himself brought forward a plan for establishing a permanent Commonwealth Secretariat in order to ensure not only closer consultation between Britain and the Dominions but more direct participation by them in the fashioning of British foreign policy. The plan was dropped, for Canada and South Africa opposed it; but its implications were very different from those of Curtin's appeal to the United States in December 1941.

The Second World War widened Australia's horizon, and made her leaders aware of the need for a more positive approach to the problems of foreign policy. In the past Australia had been content to assert her objectives, such as the maintenance of White Australia, and to rely on others, in particular on Britain, to create the external conditions which would make these objectives attainable. After the war, however, it was evident that never again could Britain exercise in the Pacific sufficient military power to act as Australia's shield: and that Australia would have to rely for her security either on the establishment of a stable international order through the United Nations or, if this were to fail, on the renewal in some form of her wartime association with the United States. In either case her policies would now have to command support on their merits.

It became evident also that, although Japan had been overwhelmingly defeated, her initial victories and conquests had so humiliated the West in Asian eyes and had so encouraged the growth of nationalism in South-East Asia that the old colonial powers could not re-assert their pre-war influence in the Far East. This necessitated an adjustment in Australia's relations with her immediate neighbours, for she would now have to make her policies acceptable not to Europeans exercising colonial authority but, as they gained their independence, to the Asian peoples themselves.

Thus the war with Japan, despite its victorious outcome, has accentuated rather than allayed the traditional Australian anxiety about the Near North, for the problem remains that in South-East Asia the population is increasing more rapidly than the production of food, and with the awakening of Asian nationalism the pressure to find new outlets overseas is likely to grow. This pressure is already driving Asians south-

### *Australia's Expanding Horizon*

wards on either flank of the Australian continent. In Fiji there are 250,000 people, more than fifty per cent of them migrants from India. Mauritius has a population of half a million, the majority of whom are also Indian. Within one generation, two at the most, these islands will be entirely controlled by Indians. And at Australia's very back door there is the newly established United States of Indonesia with a population of seventy-five millions expanding at the rate of nearly two millions a year.

In these circumstances an under-populated and under-developed Australia provides both an invitation because of its apparently "wide, open spaces" and a provocation because of its exclusive migration policy. For Australians there can be no question of abandoning the White Australia policy—in view of the tragic warning of the racial conflicts in South Africa—but it is recognised in Canberra that the Commonwealth will have neither the military strength nor the moral authority to stand against an aroused Asia, unless it builds up a very much larger population and makes better use of its great natural resources.

Since 1947, in response to this challenge, successive Australian governments have pursued a most active immigration policy, the aim of which has been pungently expressed in the slogan 'Double or Quit.' The outcome has been spectacularly successful, for in the five years 1948-1952 the population of the Commonwealth rose by 563,000 from this source alone, and, since the rate of natural increase also rose, the total gain over this period was 1,115,000 bringing the population to 8,750,000 by the end of 1952. In these five years the number of migrants entering Australia was almost equal to the number she had received in the previous half century.

The adoption of this dramatic programme at a time when Labour administrations were in power in Canberra and in four of the six states marked a significant change in the attitude of the Labour Party, which in the years between the wars had consistently objected to the use of public funds to assist immigration. By 1948, however, the shortage of labour throughout Australia became so acute that this grudging attitude could not be maintained, and the Commonwealth Government—led by J. B. Chifley, a man of vision and courage—embarked upon a programme of mass immigration which in 1949 and again in 1950 brought to Australia's shores more than 150,000 new settlers. Since the majority of these were "foreign workers," mostly drawn from camps for Displaced Persons in Europe, Australia not only served her own needs but also met her obligation to the International Refugee Organisation. In three years Australia gave refuge to nearly 200,000 Europeans made

## *A New Nation*

homeless by the war—an achievement unrivalled, in proportion to population, by any other member of the I.R.O. Thus, for the first time in her history, Australia was able to play a leading role in the solution of an acute international problem.

When the Menzies Government—a Liberal-Country Party Coalition—came to power, it adopted in March, 1950, a yet more ambitious programme which raised the annual migration target to 200,000, the majority of whom were to come not from Britain, as in the past, but from Europe. To make possible the absorption of so large an influx into an already strained economy, the Government planned to spend £A1000 million over the next five years on development projects. But this meant increasing the nation's annual capital expenditure by 25 per cent, and Australia's ability to do this depended primarily on her maintaining a high level of exports in order to earn the means of importing capital goods for the expansion of agriculture and basic industry.

In 1951, however, the pressure of inflation at home and the decline in Australia's earnings abroad—owing to a fall in world prices—compelled the government to modify its policy. With inflation threatening to get out of hand and with no section of the community prepared to accept the drastic measures needed to check it, the country could not continue to absorb immigrants at the planned rate. During 1951 and 1952 the net intake was maintained with some difficulty at 100,000 a year and the official target of 80,000 for 1953 was condemned by the Labour Party as far too high. Although more than 30,000 people emigrated from Australia during 1952, unemployment rose and by the middle of 1953 (when 25,000 Australians were "on the dole," compared with barely 1,000 in 1948) the trade unions were protesting that the maintenance of full employment was being endangered by the governments' immigration policy.

The increase in both emigration and unemployment is a symptom of a graver problem—the inability of the Commonwealth Government to find the means of financing development on the scale necessary to maintain the progress of the past seven years; and the principal reason for this is the fact that food production has not kept pace with the growth in population and has failed to provide the export surplus necessary to support the national development programme. Since 1939 the output of food has risen by 19 per cent but the population has increased by 24 per cent. In 1952 the volume of food exported was the lowest for twenty-five years and, although this was partly due to a particularly bad season, experts in agricultural economics have already given warning

## *Australia's Expanding Horizon*

that Australia will become a food importer within the next decade unless urgent and substantial measures are taken to increase production.

This serious situation has been created by both external and internal causes, some of which the Commonwealth Government has been unable to control because the constitution does not give it power to do so. The main cause perhaps is that since the war the world has been prepared to pay such vast prices for Australian wool—the price rose by more than 300 per cent between 1947 and 1951—that considerable areas of wheatland and pasture have been converted to sheep-raising. This could not be prevented by government action, but because the Australian pound is undervalued in relation to sterling, exporters have received in addition an automatic bonus of 25 per cent, which neither the Labour Party nor the Liberals have found it politically expedient to withdraw. Thus the Country Party has been allowed to hold the nation to ransom, and—economically more serious—primary producers in general have been earning such considerable profits that there has been little incentive for them to raise their output so long as world prices and domestic taxation remain high. Nor has it been easy for them in any case to obtain the equipment, materials and labour to expand agricultural production. In the inflationary conditions of the past five years the national economy has been seriously distorted because the excessive and uncontrolled demand for consumer goods has diverted resources into non-essential production at the expense of much needed development in agriculture.

This situation has been accentuated by the recent mass immigration, for it has been the policy of Labour and non-Labour governments alike to give priority to technicians and craftsmen who have inevitably settled in the already swollen cities. The failure to encourage the migration of agricultural workers has been so marked that fewer than one in ten of those receiving assisted passages have found employment on the land.

It was not until March, 1952, that the Commonwealth Government made any serious effort to check the indiscriminate expansion of non-essential industries and to stimulate primary production. Even then its plans were calculated to do little more in the next five years than restore the output of food, in relation to population, to the level prevailing in 1939. How far this falls short of the nation's true need is evident from the latest official estimate of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in Canberra. The Bureau reports that, if the population continues to increase at the present rate, there will be eleven million people to feed by 1960 and that, if exports are to be maintained at the volume necessary to pay for imports, Australia will have to increase her production of



## *A New Nation*

wheat by 25 per cent, of dairy produce by 37 per cent and of meat by 50 per cent. These targets are not beyond Australia's capacity, but they are not likely to be achieved unless the Australian people are prepared to make very much greater efforts and sacrifices than they have in the luxuriant years since the war.

These internal, economic problems have a direct bearing on Australia's external, political relations. What is at stake is not merely her standard of living but her survival. Unless Australia can substantially increase her exports, she will not be able to maintain the rate of immigration or the scale of development needed to justify the White Australia policy. Nor will she be able to play her proper role, as a great food-provider, in the defence of the free world. Surplus Australian food could become a weapon of first-rate significance in the Cold War against Communism in Asia and could make Australia so valuable an asset to the West that the United States would be bound to support and protect her, regardless of whether a formal pact existed or not.

If Australia can increase her population to twenty millions by the end of this century and can regain her position as one of the world's leading exporters of food, her material security and her moral right to maintain the White Australia policy will be greatly enhanced. Nevertheless, the long-term threat from Asia remains and it has been made the more serious by the triumph of Communism in China. A generation hence Australia's northern neighbours may well be tempted to move southwards in search of *Lebensraum*, unless there is such a substantial improvement in the standard of living of Asian peoples that they can be adequately sustained within their own boundaries from their own resources and from the free flow of world trade.

Although this threat may be slow to develop, Australians have come to realise since the war that they must take up the challenge now, and that they have an immediate interest in helping their Asian neighbours to gain political freedom and economic security. In 1947, therefore, when the Indonesians were in revolt against Dutch rule, Australia joined with India in bringing their case before the Security Council of the United Nations. Similarly, in 1950, when the Commonwealth foreign ministers met at Colombo to consider the implications of the Communist victory in China, Australia brought forth an ambitious and imaginative plan for co-operative action to assist the economic development of South and South-East Asia.

In launching the Colombo Plan, Australia revealed her immediate

## *Australia's Expanding Horizon*

anxiety about the Communist threat in Asia, but her subsequent attitude towards the Japanese peace treaty indicates that, while the present makers of her foreign policy are more concerned about the spread of Communism from China than they are about the revival of Imperialism in Japan, the Japanese menace is still taken seriously, especially in the Labour Party. In 1951 during the discussions that led to the signing of a peace treaty between Japan and the Western Allies, the Menzies Government endeavoured to insist that Japanese rearmament should be prohibited, but it had to admit that Japan could not be left defenceless and that neither Australia nor any other power was prepared to undertake the burden of Japanese defence in order to keep her disarmed. By setting her hand to the treaty, Australia accepted the reconstitution of a powerful and self-supporting Japan.

Defending this policy, the Minister for External Affairs (R. G. Casey) declared that while Australia was "under no illusions that democracy had taken root in Japan," she had to contemplate "the alternative perils of an aggressive and fully-armed Japan, which could again threaten Australian security, and a defenceless and economically prostrate Japan, which would be an easy prey to Communism." Mr. Casey insisted that Australia faced "a much more pressing danger than Japan is likely to be for many years," namely "imperialist Communism which is already on Australia's doorstep." While not denying this, the leader of the Labour Party (Dr. H. V. Evatt) denounced the treaty as "appeasement of a cruel enemy," and declared that it was a "deadly illusion" to suppose, as the United States did, that the Japanese would "graciously use their arms solely in the interests of the Western democracies against China and Russia."

The danger of a resurgence of Japanese militarism was appreciated by all parties, and the Menzies Government realised that Australian public opinion would not accept a peace settlement which allowed Japan to rearm, unless the United States would enter into a mutual security treaty with Australia and New Zealand, guaranteeing them American aid in the event of future Japanese aggression. The conclusion of the ANZUS Pact was regarded in Canberra as a triumph, since it meant that the United States was declaring in advance that "an armed attack in the Pacific area on any one of the parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety" and that it would "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes." This wording is not quite as strong as that used in the Atlantic Pact, but it is regarded as an equally firm commitment. Moreover, the treaty is intended to safeguard

## *A New Nation*

not merely the mainland territories of each party, but also the "island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific."

This provision is of special importance to Australia in view of the awkward situation which has arisen with Indonesia about the future of Dutch New Guinea. Since 1949 the Indonesians have been endeavouring to assert their claim to the Western half of the island which is still under Dutch sovereignty. When this dispute arose, the Australian Government declared that the future of the area was not a question which could be settled without recognition of Australia's "vital strategic interests", since the two halves of New Guinea are "naturally integrated." The Labour Party took a much stronger line, and Dr. Evatt declared that it would not be in the interests of the New Guinea natives to be brought under the jurisdiction of an Asiatic state predominantly Moslem in religion. He proposed, therefore, that Australia should either purchase Western New Guinea from Holland or obtain trusteeship over it from the United Nations.

Although the ANZUS Pact has undoubtedly strengthened Australia's international position, it has created—quite wrongly—the unfortunate impression abroad that Australia is drawing away from the British Commonwealth and is in danger of becoming unduly dependent on the United States. This impression arises chiefly because Australia and New Zealand, rather than forgo the opportunity of obtaining a guarantee from the United States, yielded to the American insistence that Britain should not be a party to the pact. When this treaty was first mooted, it was believed in London that it would be merely a pact of mutual assistance, but, as finally drafted, it established a Council of Foreign Ministers and a Military Committee, thus providing the machinery for peacetime policy-making as well as wartime action. When this was appreciated in London, the treaty took on a new significance, since the United Kingdom regarded herself as bound—by virtue of her Commonwealth obligations—to come automatically to the aid of the Anzac Dominions in the event of war. The British Government contended, therefore, that it should have a voice in framing Pacific policy or should at least have an observer present when policy was being made.

This case was presented to the ANZUS countries by Mr. Churchill, when he returned to power in 1951. Once again, however, the United States refused to widen the membership of the pact, arguing that, if Britain were included, there would be no reason for excluding other countries with interests in the Pacific, such as France and Holland. In taking this stand the United States provided a reminder that she has

## *Australia's Expanding Horizon*

no intention of allowing the ANZUS Pact to develop into a Pacific equivalent of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The security system which the United States has built up in the Pacific is not based on one comprehensive, co-operative alliance, like NATO, but on a series of bilateral treaties with particular countries—with Australia and New Zealand, the Philippines and Japan. The advantage of this arrangement for the United States is that she can deal with her allies individually and, as she did in the Second World War, can keep firmly in her own hands the making of policy for the Pacific at large.

In these circumstances Australia is likely to find little opportunity of using the machinery of the ANZUS Pact to influence American policy, and she will need to be on her guard, therefore, lest she should be led into supporting American-made policies which run counter to her interests. In Asia, for instance, Australia can confidently follow the American lead if the policy of the U.S. Government is based on principles consistent with President Truman's Point Four Plan for providing economic aid to under-developed areas in order to build up their resistance to Communism. But Australian support should not be forthcoming if, as some influential sections of the Republican Party suggest, President Eisenhower should adopt a hostile policy towards Asian nationalism because it is being exploited for purposes of Communist aggression. This is well appreciated in Canberra and the Australian Government is anxious not to be drawn farther into the American orbit. It may seem inconsistent with this view that Australia should have followed the American, not the British line, with regard to the recognition of Communist China, but her decision in this case, was largely due to reasons of internal politics. The Menzies Government could hardly grant international recognition to a Communist regime in China, when it had just been given an electoral "mandate" to outlaw the Communist Party in Australia. A more valid indication of Australia's long-term policy is to be found in the Government's outright rejection in 1951 of a proposal by the distinguished economist, Sir Douglas Copland, that Australia should "move towards a more direct financial and economic relationship to the United States" and should tie her currency to the dollar not to sterling.

Finally, to regard the ANZUS Pact as evidence that Australia is turning away from Britain is to ignore the fact that the government which concluded the treaty is led by a man who has consistently declared his faith in Britain and the British Commonwealth with greater warmth, eloquence and vision than any Australian since Alfred Deakin. Mr. Menzies has repeatedly emphasised the importance of creating "a

### *A New Nation*

common Empire policy," so that the British Commonwealth—while not attempting to set itself up as a Third Force independent of the United States—can exercise its full authority on the side of moderation in the Cold War. If the Commonwealth remains united, as it was at the Coronation conference of Prime Ministers in June 1953, on the need for negotiating a settlement with the Soviet Union, it may be able to prevent the present conflict becoming what Mr. Menzies has called "an old-fashioned bilateral contest between the Communist autocracy of Russia and the democratic Capitalism of the United States." The supreme interest of Australia and the British Commonwealth lies in ensuring that this conflict should not develop into a military trial of strength and that the two great protagonists should negotiate a "live and let live" settlement. Within this framework the Western Powers, while maintaining their defensive strength, could concentrate on meeting the Russian and Chinese challenge by building up the political independence and the economic stability of those countries that are threatened by Communism.

## A NEW NATION II

---

*The nation which has been thrust into this situation by the course of history has very little history of its own, and is therefore often described as a "young country." Geologically, this is absurd. Australia is probably the oldest land-mass in the world. Historically, it is equivocal. Australia was born, like a Cockney urchin, old before its time. It was able to take over ready-made the manners, morals and methods of the British Isles. Yet its own sense of nationhood is certainly new, still a little rough and self-consciously assertive.*

*The history which binds Australia to the old world, and provides the threads from which the fabric of nationhood must be woven, is outlined by Ian Grey, a New Zealand-born and Australian-educated historian, whose wartime career included liaison service with the Soviet navy and with the British naval mission in Moscow. Since the war he has been with the Information Department of the Foreign Office and, more recently, with the Royal Institute of International Affairs.*

# *Origins and Legends*

IAN GREY

FOR CENTURIES Europeans cherished fables of a southern continent: it was a land of untold wealth, a second Cathay. Then they discovered Australia, and the dreams melted away in disillusion. One of our earliest recorded reactions to the new land is that of the gentle pirate, William Dampier, who touched its western shores in 1688 and wrote, "If it were not for that sort of pleasure which results from the discovery even of the barrenest spot upon the globe, this coast would not have charmed me much." As for the inhabitants, his comment was, "The Hodmadods of Monomatpa, though a nasty people, are gentlemen to these."

Discovered in the seventeenth century, the continent drew no interest until well into the eighteenth when James Cook, a captain in the Royal Navy, charted its eastern coast. Jealousy and suspicion of French ambitions in the Pacific had stirred the Admiralty to equip Cook's expedition, but his reports did little to increase interest in the land itself.

Not until Britain lost her American colonies in 1782 did it occur to anyone in London that some use might be made of this vast, unsettled area. It was offered first as a home to the Americans who had remained loyal to the crown, but without exception they preferred to stay in North America. Then it was seen as a possible dumping ground for Britain's surplus convicts who had formerly been shipped to America. In 1787 some twelve hundred convicts and guards were loaded on to eleven ships and dispatched to Australia under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip.

It was an act of expediency, untouched in its inception by any vision of the great dominion which would develop from such humble beginnings. The sole concern of the Government was to be rid of its surplus convicts once and for all, and Australia was chosen because it was so far distant that few convicts would ever be able to return.

Britain has always been liable to embark on great projects on grounds of expediency and without forethought, and more often than not the

## *Origins and Legends*

project has been saved from disaster by the presence of a leader gifted with the vision which the government lacked. The settlement of Australia was a case in point. In its early years the penal colony of New South Wales might have foundered had it not been for Phillip, its first Governor.

The possibility of free settlers migrating to the colony was barely considered at this stage, for the land had been reported barren and little was expected of it. Nor was this view limited to government circles. Everyone thought of Australia, when they thought of it at all, solely in terms of convicts, until the bleating of sheep carried the news that it had an economic future. By contrast, Phillip showed a vision and faith in the new settlement from the start which was almost excessive.

Arriving in Botany Bay in command of the "First Fleet" on the 18th January, 1788, he decided that the site was unsuitable and sailed a few miles further north to investigate Port Jackson, where he found what he described as "the finest harbour in the world" (a sentiment shared by all subsequent generations of Sydney residents) and this was the first trumpeting of his faith. His expedition was poorly equipped for establishing a settlement in an unexplored and hostile land. Livestock died and corn would not grow. For two years the settlement was threatened with famine. Food was strictly rationed and Phillip, who for many months had to live in a canvas shanty, pooled his own food store with the general stock, drawing only his bare ration.

In the midst of these troubles his dispatches repeated his conviction "that this country will prove the most valuable acquisition Great Britain ever made." His own contribution to the new country was great. Before he returned to England he could point to 2,000 acres of land under cultivation at Parramatta and to a colony that had been successfully launched in the face of fearful difficulties. It cost him his health, and he died in Bath in 1814 in such obscurity that for more than eighty years his grave could not be found.

The colony was at first wholly penal in character, and in practice the penal system was made worse by the lack of any code of regulations. On arrival the convicts were assigned to the person of the Governor who had absolute discretion to reassign them to colonists or retain them to work on government undertakings. The majority were assigned to colonists who often exercised control by brutal use of the lash, although technically a convict could not be flogged without the sanction of a magistrate. But it was the convicts who were retained to labour in chain gangs and to rot in barracks who suffered most.



## *A New Nation*

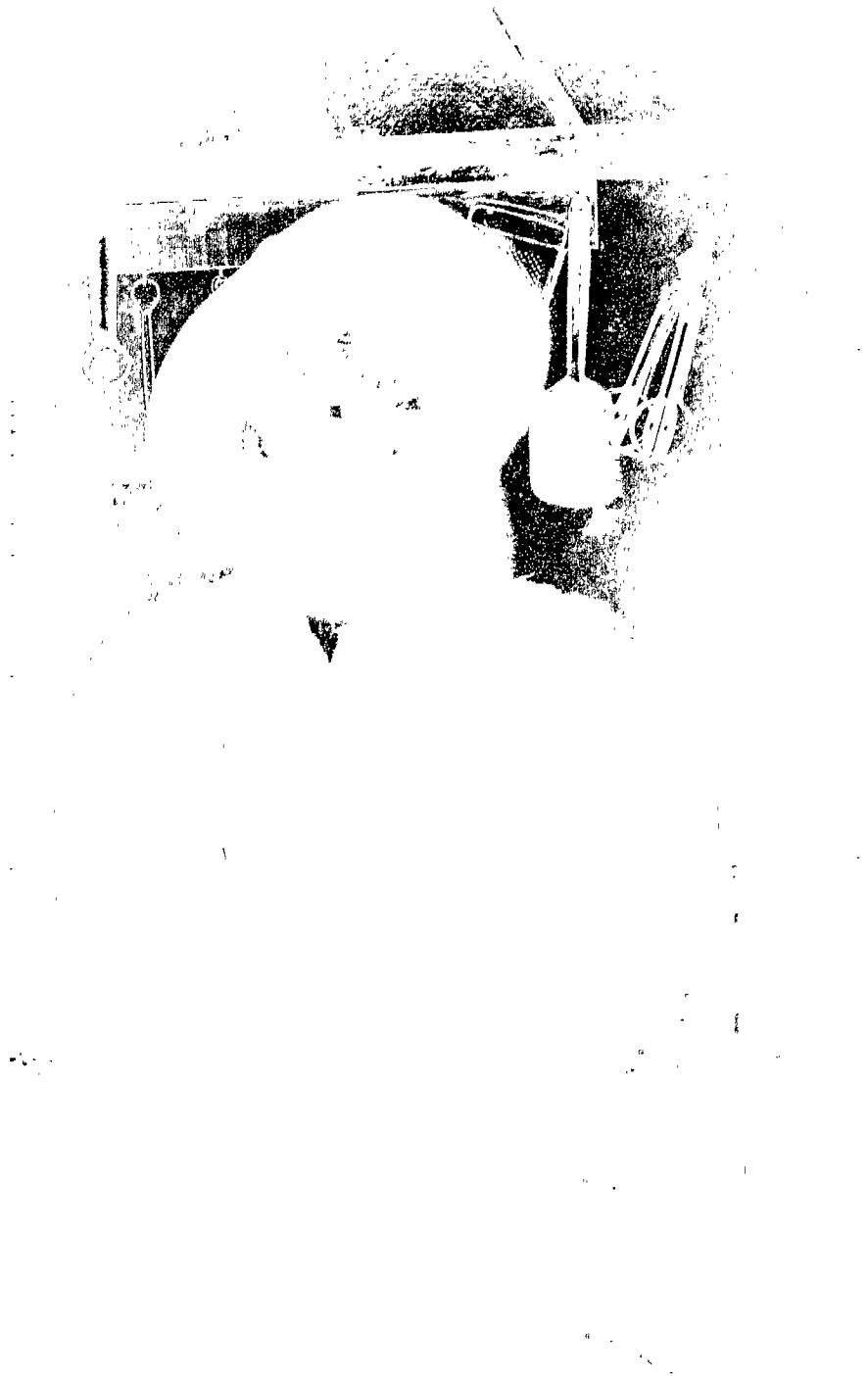
Women convicts were similarly reassigned, or put to work in the "female factories" as the government barracks for women were called. The women were generally more corrupted than the men by the time they reached New South Wales and, while some married and settled down to normal lives, the majority became prostitutes.

The Governor had powers to emancipate convicts for good conduct and, in the absence of any code of penal administration, a body of conventions came to be accepted by which a convict could receive a ticket of leave, a conditional pardon and even an absolute pardon before he had served the full term of his sentence. But the observance of these conventions was, like the administration as a whole, haphazard and uncertain, and it was this element of uncertainty which weighed more heavily on convicts than even the brutal treatment of some masters or the inhuman neglect of the chain gangs.

The penal colony, left to formulate its own regulations, depended in its early years almost entirely on the character and competence of its governors and officials. During these years it was fortunate in having two great governors, but unfortunate in the officers of the New South Wales Corps. Both Phillip (1788-1792) and Lachlan Macquarie (1809-1821) were distinguished by their humane attitude towards the convicts and by their faith in the future of the colony. Both saw in the convicts children of misfortune who, given the chance, could live free and useful lives; both were active in settling emancipists on small holdings and in rehabilitating them in other ways.

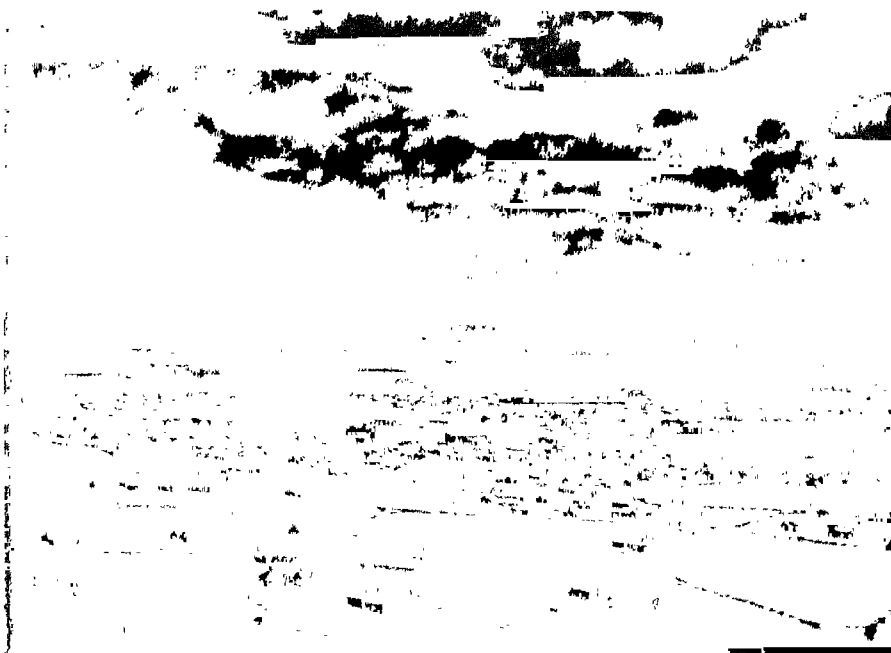
Between the terms of these two governors, however, the colony was afflicted with the corrupt rule of the New South Wales Corps. Specially recruited in 1789 because the marines and other services were reluctant to serve so far afield, the Corps attracted officers who were second rate, or worse than second rate for many were actively corrupt. After the departure of Phillip and until the arrival of his successor Hunter, the Corps was in absolute control and ruled the colony by systematic extortion and monopoly. They introduced the traffic in rum and succeeded in undoing much of the reformatory work of Phillip.

Hunter, King and Bligh, who were the governors in succession, found themselves powerless to break up the rackets of the officers. Happily for the future of the colony, the 1808 military rebellion against Governor Bligh forced the British Government to act. The Corps was disbanded and Macquarie, the next governor, arrived with his own regiment to support his rule. If the Corps deserves more than brief mention in the history of Australia it is on two counts: firstly, it brought to Sydney





*A NEW NATION has built itself a new capital at Canberra (Above)  
Federal Parliament House (Below) A general view of the city*



## *Origins and Legends*

Lieutenant John Macarthur who was to become the founder of the nation's economic future; secondly, through its monopolies, the Corps made it possible for a small number of people to acquire vast holdings of land, a factor of importance in later history.

The twelve years of Macquarie's governorship were years of rapid development. The intake of convicts resulting from the sharp increase in crime in England after the Napoleonic Wars was greater than ever before, and the population rose from 11,950 to 38,778. Macquarie built roads, wharves, and buildings, and replaced the corrupt and incompetent military rule with a civil administration. During his term the colony began to show promise of something more than a gaol.

There has been much discussion of the influence of the penal settlement on the development of Australia and its people. Many Australians have been at pains to play down the possibility of any taint being transmitted by the convicts. It is said that the convict element was completely absorbed by the later influx of population, and the legend has been fostered of the convict sentenced to deportation for stealing a loaf of bread or poaching a rabbit. Neither argument is necessary or accurate.

Between 130,000 and 160,000 convicts were deported and, despite the low proportion of women convicts, their descendants must be numerous. Of the crimes that earned the sentence of deportation, forgery, for which Thomas Wainwright was sent to Tasmania, and robbery with violence were far more typical than poaching.

The criminal law administered by British courts in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was extremely harsh, but it must be accepted that on the whole the convicts were guilty. They were the products of poverty and of the slums bred in England by the social turmoil of the industrial revolution. Most were forlorn creatures defeated by their environment, but their children, born in the sunshine of a new land, grew into hardy and adequate citizens. All observers noted the superiority of the offspring over their parents; and in their standards of conduct subsequent generations have shown themselves as law abiding as other British peoples.

In fact there are no grounds for the fear that a tendency to crime is transmissible to future generations and it is well for Britain that this is so, for only a small proportion of the criminal population was deported to Australia; the majority served their sentences in British prisons.

The penal system was none the less evil. It led to degradation of the convicts, and brutalisation of those who came into contact with it. There

## *A New Nation*

is ample evidence of this in contemporary accounts, particularly in the report of the Special Commissioners sent to investigate conditions by the British Government, moved by belated stirrings of conscience. The system was evil also because it meant settling a new land with the dregs of the mother country, and not with her chosen stock. On the other hand the penal system provided the motive for settlement, and it supplied the labour which laid the foundations of an independent and powerful dominion.

Although for more than a third of its history Australia was almost exclusively a penal colony, it is doubtful whether the nation has suffered in any way through these lowly origins. In fact it is difficult to trace any influence of convictism in modern Australia beyond a few turns of speech and a certain defensive attitude in its people who tend to exaggerate the importance of this phase in history.

The future, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, appeared to hold little promise. The colony was serving its purpose as "a receptacle for offenders," to use an official description; but when transportation ceased, and the British Government was already anticipating that this would happen, it seemed to offer only subsistence-level farming, which was not enough to attract free settlers and capital. A staple industry was needed, preferably, in Sir Joseph Banks's words, "some native raw material of importance to a manufacturing country such as England," enabling Australia to compete, as she had to compete throughout the century, with North America for migrants and capital from the British Isles. Experiments were made with several industries including flax growing, seal hunting, and whaling; eventually the answer was found in merino wool.

Merino wool put Australia on her feet and gave her a future. Manufacturers in Yorkshire noted its fine quality and Britain awoke to the rich economic possibilities of the colony. Wool was an urgent and basic raw material for her rapidly expanding textile industry. For centuries Britain had herself been a wool producing country; but the increase in her population, the Napoleonic Wars, and finally the industrial revolution had combined to make it more profitable to rear sheep for mutton. Wool was imported from Spain and Germany, but here was a land within the Empire which could produce finer wools in unlimited quantities. Free settlers began to flow into the colony and with all its dynamic force British capital took in hand the development of the new pastoral industry.

The transformation in the vision of Australia's future was dramatic.

## *Origins and Legends*

From a "receptacle for offenders" it became a land of rich promise; and this was the work of John Macarthur, a man gifted with vision and tenacity, even with a touch of genius. The development of fine quality merino wool and the foundation of the pastoral industry were his achievements, and he has been justly called "the authentic founder of Australia's independence."

No country can have owed more to one of its citizens than Australia owes to John Macarthur, but the gratitude of later generations has been mixed with resentment, for he deprived them of a legend and a hero. He was a remarkable, and an exceedingly unattractive man. Arriving in the colony in 1791 as a lieutenant in the New South Wales Corps, he showed himself to be rapacious and unprincipled in his pursuit of wealth and power. He drew enormous profits from the rackets run by the officers of the Corps and particularly from the rum traffic which besotted the young colony. By 1806, when Bligh became Governor, he was the richest man in New South Wales and he matched his new-found power with an arrogance which made him widely hated.

He was quarrelsome and a law unto himself, fighting with every governor from Hunter to Macquarie. Governor King considered him capable of anything that "art, cunning, and a pair of basilisk eyes can afford." He was responsible for the military revolt against Governor Bligh which led to the disbanding of the Corps. Much of his career is a disagreeable record of profiteering and quarrelling from which he emerged enriched and unharmed, for he combined cunning with intelligence and, when required, considerable charm.

Macarthur began his experiments in breeding sheep in 1794, three years after his arrival in Sydney. He bought some Bengal ewes which he crossed with English rams. The cross produced wool of a distinctly better quality and encouraged him in his experiments. Three years later he imported a few head of Spanish merino sheep and by crossing them carefully with the mixed breed he achieved his first Australian merino wool. At the same time he achieved a breed which was perfectly adapted to local conditions.

The improvement in the quality and weight of fleece was remarkable, and brought it close to the fine German and Spanish wools. Macarthur continued to improve his flocks; specimens of his wool taken to England in 1801 aroused the interest of Yorkshire manufacturers, and, when he went to England in 1803, he found that his experiments were well-known and that the prospects of New South Wales as a source of wool were being widely discussed.

## *A New Nation*

Everywhere he went he talked persuasively about the future of the pastoral industry, boasting that Australia contained "tracts of land adapted for pasture so boundless that no assignable limits can be set to the number of fine-woolled sheep which can be raised." When he returned to Australia in 1805, he carried instructions from the Colonial Secretary, Lord Camden, to the Governor that he was to be given an unconditional grant of 5,000 acres and the labour of thirty convicts to pursue his experiments. This noble property, which he named "Camden Park," remains in the possession of his descendants.

Macarthur was impatient. His work was acknowledged but not fully accepted. He complained that it aroused neither interest nor emulation, and there was some basis for his complaint. As late as 1819 he was still the only important pastoralist exclusively interested in wool, while others turned to breeding sheep for mutton which returned a quick profit. New South Wales then contained only some 100,000 sheep, mostly poor breeds. The colony was poised on the brink of a new career and hesitating, but nothing could hold it from its true course.

The year 1821 saw the first commercial export of wool to England. It was a small amount of 175,400 pounds, but it was the beginning. A year later Macarthur had the satisfaction of learning that his wools had been judged the equal of finest Saxon wools. By 1830 the colony was exporting two million pounds, and nine years later the figure was ten million, while in 1845 it had leapt to twenty-four million. The quantity of wool that Australia could produce seemed unlimited, and soon Australian sheep were supplying more fine wool to British manufacturers than Germany and Spain together. Today Australia exports about 1,321,525,000 pounds a year.

The thirty years which followed the first commercial export of wool were years of great and rapid development. British migrants and investments flowed into New South Wales and, although the flow was small compared with that from Britain to North America, it was large enough to transform the young colony. No longer merely a penal settlement, it was developing self-respect and a new outlook.

Early signs of change were the demand for some voice in their own government, and for confirmation of the legal status of emancipists. Until 1823, New South Wales was ruled by governors who exercised their powers arbitrarily without reference to any council. They were obliged to assume the widest powers, imposing taxes and making regulations which had the force of law. On the whole they exercised their powers wisely, but the colony was primarily a gaol and many of

## *Origins and Legends*

the regulations were restrictive. It was this which incensed the free settlers.

In 1823 an Act of Parliament placed some limits on the powers of the governors, mainly by appointing a Legislative Council with advisory powers, and at the same time removed certain legal disabilities from which the emancipists had suffered. The time was not far off when they would be demanding powers of self-government; but the political agitation for an elected assembly only became general when the colonists were united in opposition to the land policy of the British Government.

For twenty-five years the colonists had been hemmed into the coastal plains about Sydney. Several attempts had been made to penetrate the range of mountains which shut them off from the lands to the west, but all were turned back by sheer cliffs until, in 1813, three men, Blaxland, Lawson, and Wentworth, succeeded in crossing the range. During the next fifteen years a series of explorations north and south revealed well-watered plains extending westwards on the other side of the mountains. Oxley and other explorers reported enthusiastically on the new pastures which offered grazing for great flocks of sheep and herds of cattle.

As they moved westwards, the explorers were constantly puzzled by rivers flowing north-west and south-west. General speculation was that they might flow into a great inland sea. In the three years up to 1828 the colony suffered severe drought, crops failed and sheep died in large numbers. The rivers, and the possibility of an inland sea, suggested well-watered lands to the west and the colonists were anxious to find them.

The riddle of the rivers was solved by Captain Charles Sturt whose two expeditions in 1828-30 have an epic quality, and are the greatest journeys of inland exploration in Australian history. He discovered the junction of the Murrumbidgee and the Darling rivers with the Murray and traced the course of this vast waterway—"Australia's Mississippi"—to the sea. His discoveries made a tremendous contribution to the development of the colony, and gave rise to the settlement of South Australia six years later, but Sturt himself received little recognition for his work. He is one of Australia's neglected heroes, relegated to the schoolroom chant of names which have remained only names.

News of the rich pastures west of the dividing range quickly reached Britain, and glowing accounts appeared in newspapers and magazines of this new colony where grants of land could be obtained readily and cheaply. Soon the emigrant ships became as familiar as convict transports in Port Jackson.



## *A New Nation*

The discovery of new pastures to the west was welcomed most of all by the pastoralists. Their flocks were growing and they needed more space. In a spontaneous movement they pushed out into the new lands. They carried only bare necessities and, moving with their flocks in surging waves, they squatted where they found water and pasture. Usually they followed closely in the tracks of the explorers who went ahead as advance guards, but sometimes the squatters were ahead of the explorers. In the same way the Russians, during the two previous centuries, after the preliminary skirmishes of Yermak and his Cossacks, had moved across the expanses of Siberia until they came to the great walls of China. The great wall which halted the Australian squatters was one of drought and desert.

The pastoral expansion of the 'twenties and 'thirties was no planned, systematic movement. It arose spontaneously from the needs of the sheep farmers and it was viewed with hostility by the British Government. The official policy was one of concentrated settlement and by 1829 the nineteen counties stretching from the Manning River south to the Goulburn Plains and from the coast to the Wellington Valley, an area bounded roughly by a semi-circle of 150 miles radius around Sydney, had been proclaimed as the limits of New South Wales. Settlement was forbidden beyond these limits and squatters who moved into the "good land farther out" were ridiculously regarded as trespassers and outlaws.

It was a restraint which might have proved serious and damaging to the young colony; happily it could not be enforced. The settling energy of the colonists heeded no restraints and they were supported by the manufacturers of Yorkshire whose demands for the magnificent merino wool were insatiable. It was only a matter of time before settlement beyond the limits of the nineteen counties was recognised as legal, and in 1836 payment of an annual licence fee gave the squatter certain limited rights.

No better example of the spontaneous movement to new lands can be found than the settlement of Victoria. Major Thomas Mitchell explored the fertile western district of Victoria in 1836 and in his enthusiasm called it "Australia Felix." Overland from New South Wales and across the straits from Van Dieman's Land, the colonists raced to this new region. In 1840, after a mere four years of settlement, the population exceeded 10,000 and the sheep numbered more than 100,000. Seven years later there were 43,000 people and 4,000,000 sheep; in 1851 (on the eve of the gold rushes) 77,000 people, 6,000,000 sheep and 400,000 cattle.

## *Origins and Legends*

The forties saw a similar spread of pastoralists northwards into the territory which became the state of Queensland in 1859. The movement gained momentum until, in the pastoral boom of the sixties, the squatters swept in a wave over the whole of Queensland and up to the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The word "squatter" is American in origin and meant there, as later in Australia, a man who took possession of land to which he had no legal title. In the 1820's, when the word first became current in New South Wales, a squatter was disreputable, almost an outlaw. It was stated in evidence before a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1815 that "These persons are almost invariably the instigators and promoters of crime, receivers of stolen property, illegal vendors of spirits, and harbourers of runaways, bushrangers, and vagrants." Gradually the squatter became respectable, and in 1836 the system of licences made him completely so.

In the period of pastoral expansion most of the squatters were men of capital who belonged to the middle and upper classes of Britain, and included a number of army officers released from service, as the military establishment in Britain was being cut down. In Sydney they joined members of the wealthier, established colonial families in pushing out into the new lands. These squatters of the later period were homogeneous both in origin and outlook. They reflected the ideal of the English rural gentry, and accepted its responsibilities.

In granting grazing licences to the squatters the British Government had made a concession which gave them respectability and little else. The licence merely allowed the squatter to graze his stock on the waste lands of the Crown without any other rights. In practice the squatter had some security of tenure, as the price of Crown land had been fixed at £1 an acre, and at this price there were few buyers. The squatters themselves refused to pay it. They had put their own labour and capital into the land, and felt they had a moral right to it, in the same way as the Russian peasants claimed that the land of the absentee owners rightfully belonged to those who worked and lived by it.

For ten years the Government refused to recognise the squatters' claims; and it was not mere obstinacy. It was felt in London that the Crown held these lands on trust for future generations and should not transfer them in perpetuity to a handful of settlers. But there was justice in the squatters' claim, and finally the Waste Lands Act, of 1846, gave them a greater measure of security.

Before this Act was passed the long dissatisfaction of the landed

## *A New Nation*

colonists with official policy had begun to take the form of an agitation for self-government. This had been urged by Wentworth and others, but it now became a real issue. The Government had made a concession in 1842 giving the colonists power to elect two-thirds of the members of the New South Wales Legislative Council. But the disposal of waste lands, the most important item, was reserved to the Crown.

Eventually, in a mood of paternal forbearance, the British Government gave way to the demands of the colonists, and Port Phillip was separated from New South Wales in 1850 (sowing the seeds of a neighbourly feud which has persisted half-seriously into the present day in ruderies about the River Yarra and Sydney Harbour). The new state was also given its own Legislative Council, as were Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania. Moreover, these states now gained the power to amend their own constitutions "within limits." The home Government had been conciliatory, but not generous.

In New South Wales itself, the great obstacle to development was the shortage of settlers. In 1820 the free population, was only 1,307. For the next ten years the average yearly arrival of free settlers was 867. By 1830 the colony was desperately in need of immigrants, for the pastoral industry had been established and a rich economic future was opening out.

At home in Britain, the spreading cancer of pauperism and the people's tremendous fertility threatened to choke the life of the nation. These conditions were to inspire Shaftesbury's struggle for justice in the factories, and Dickens's vehement demands for social reforms. Meanwhile the Government's traditional remedy was the export of *surplus population*.

In 1829 Thomas Peel, a wealthy man, promoted an experimental settlement in the Swan River district of Western Australia after he had read a report that the land was "not inferior in any natural essential to the plain of Lombardy." He persuaded the Colonial Office to make a grant of a million acres, which was given to migrants on the basis of forty acres for every £3 invested in improvements. The offer of land as good as the best in Italy for eighteen pence an acre attracted eager settlers, but lack of capital and other shortcomings plunged the settlement in difficulties.

From the moment he heard of this experiment, Edward Gibbon Wakefield condemned the principles on which it was based and staked his reputation as a colonial theorist on its failure. When Peel's scheme



SYDNEY—richest, gayest city of the Commonwealth—is the site of the first white settlement, and capital of New South Wales



*ADELAIDE, capital of South Australia, is a charming, modern city.  
 (Above) Adelaide homes, typical of suburban housing throughout  
 Australia. (Below) The city's skyline, seen across Torrens Lake*



## *Origins and Legends*

did fail, Wakefield became London's reigning oracle on questions of colonial settlement.

His basic theory was that land in new colonies should never be free or cheap: it should be sold at a "sufficient price." He argued that in any new settlement it was essential to maintain a proper supply of labour. Without labour the settlement could not be developed and settlers with capital would not go there. If land were cheap labourers would not work for landowners, but would become landowners themselves. Thus there were two essentials: a fund to bring out fresh supplies of labour, and a means of keeping them as labourers for a minimum period. The "sufficient price" met both requirements.

It was Wakefield's ambition to eliminate the rough and ready conditions of a newly-established colony and create from the start a civilised society, which would be an extension of English society without its paupers. Such a model colony would be self-governing and have free institutions and would depend on a responsible colonial gentry. It would also depend on a steady flow of respectable and carefully-selected labourers, for the labourer was one of the corner stones of Wakefield's edifice. He condemned the transportation of convicts and free grants of land to paupers. To build the civilised colonial society which he envisaged it was essential to select the best of Britain's stock.

He founded a Colonisation Society to act as a centre for his ideas. It coincided with the news of Captain Sturt's discovery of fertile lands in the basin of the Murray River, and the stage was set for the systematic colonisation of South Australia.

Wakefield found, as Thomas Peel had found before him, that negotiations in London were long and wearisome. The Colonial Office was opposed to new schemes; the Chancellor of the Exchequer—the story is familiar—was cutting down expenditure. But Wakefield, through his personal influence, was able to bring heavy guns to bear for his supporters included the Duke of Wellington and Sir William Molesworth. There was, too, strong public feeling in favour of a scientific immigration policy. Under pressure, the British Government passed an act in 1834 establishing the colony of South Australia, presided over by a governor, with commissioners who were to raise a loan to finance the settlement and also control the sale of land at a minimum price of twelve shillings an acre.

The colonisation of South Australia did not proceed as smoothly as Wakefield had planned. His system was too perfectly balanced and made no allowance for the human element. Disputes troubled the new

## *A New Nation*

settlement from the arrival of the first colonist at Kangaroo Island in July, 1836, but the main and completely unforeseen difficulty was that immigrants instead of cultivating their land, sold it, gambling on land values. By 1841 over 299,000 acres of land had been sold and less than 2,500 acres were under cultivation. Bankruptcy faced the colony and it was only saved by Captain George Grey, sent out in 1841 at the age of twenty-nine to take over as Governor, imposing economics and forcing the Chancellor of the Exchequer to release funds to set the colony on its feet again.

It has become the fashion to distort and dismiss Wakefield's ideas as designed merely to create "an aristocratic colony of landowners" and his achievements have received scant justice. Whatever opinions may be held about his ideal society, it must be acknowledged that he contributed greatly to the development of the colonies and that Australia, like New Zealand, is his debtor. Certain of his ideas to-day find readier acceptance under the names of "selected migration" and "assisted passages"—the two principles on which Anglo-Australian migration policy is now firmly based.

His theories hastened the end of the penal system and the granting of free institutions. His advocacy also led to considerable improvement in the choice of immigrants. But his greatest contribution was the increased flow of migrants. North America, which offered settlers opportunities at least as good as those offered by Australia, was only across the Atlantic; the voyage took but a few weeks and cost about £5. Australia was some 12,000 miles away; the voyage took four or five months and cost £25 or more. It was this disadvantage that Wakefield overcame with his land fund. Between 1836 and 1850 the fund paid out £1,750,000 in assisting 75,000 migrants to New South Wales. This was a time when the need for settlers was at its height and it was due to Wakefield that the need was met at least in part.

The gold rushes, like an earthquake, violently disrupted the even tempo of development, sweeping away the plans of the theorists. The public announcement of gold discoveries in New South Wales and Victoria was made in 1851, but for more than ten years the presence of gold had been known in official quarters. The news had been suppressed, for the government was afraid of its effect on the young settlement and particularly on the convicts. When a Sydney geologist showed Sir George Gipps samples of gold-bearing ore, gathered near Bathurst, the Governor's reply was, "Put it away, Mr. Clarke, or we shall all have our throats cut."

## *Origins and Legends*

The public announcements were received by all sections of the community with alarm. *The Sydney Morning Herald* believed they presaged "calamities far more terrible than earthquake or pestilence," while Lieutenant Governor La Trobe of Victoria feared his colony would "parallel California in crime and disorder." The Californian gold rushes were fresh and feverish memories; Poker Flat and Roaring Camp were notorious even in distant New South Wales. In the event, the colonists' fears were proved excessive and although the discovery of gold brought troubles they were more than cancelled by the great benefits.

Fortunately the first and less valuable discoveries were made in New South Wales, the older colony. With its population of 200,000 it could withstand the inrush of an additional 150,000 people. Outbreaks of crime and violence occurred, but public order was quickly established and the first impact of the gold rushes was broken. The difficulties of Victoria were far greater. In ten years her population jumped from 77,000 to 540,000 and her small body of police and officials was hard put to maintain control. By 1853, however, La Trobe had managed to assemble a large enough force to maintain order in the towns and on the gold fields, so that many visitors to the fields in later months were surprised to find the diggings so peaceful.

At first the government claimed that gold found "in its natural place of deposit" was the property of the Crown. Although legally tenable, it was not a claim that could be enforced. The diggers on all fields also resented the imposition of a licence fee of 30/- a month, and their ill-feeling was aggravated by the high-handed efforts of the police to collect it.

In 1853 the fee was reduced to £1 a month or £8 a year, but this worked no change in the mood of the diggers or in their hostility towards the police. Their ill-feeling simmered until, towards the end of 1854, it erupted in open resistance, culminating in the Eureka Stockade, an incident in Australian history which has been romanticised and its significance exaggerated out of all proportion by politicians and publicists.

The roots of the outburst lay in the diggers' hatred of the licence fees. Feeling had been running high when, in October, 1854, a brawl at a drinking shanty known as the Eureka Hotel, kept by a disreputable ex-convict from Van Dieman's Land, called Bentley, led to the murder of a digger. Bentley was accused, but being a friend of the magistrate was acquitted.

This miscarriage of justice aroused widespread indignation and a



## *A New Nation*

meeting of nearly 10,000 diggers was organised in protest. Police attempts to disperse the meeting only angered the diggers more. They overpowered the few police, rushed the hotel and burnt it down. Subsequently Bentley was arrested and convicted, while his friend, the magistrate, was dismissed. Such were the facts of the incident. It would not have been heard of again had it not been for the sequel which resulted in its posthumous elevation to an event "of crucial importance in the making of Australian Democracy."

The sequel was the formation of the Ballarat Reform League which aimed at the abolition of the licencing system and at limiting the powers of the police. Tacked on to these demands was a political programme of parliamentary representation on conditions similar to those of English Chartism. The British diggers were interested only in the abolition of the licences; and the ringleaders of the revolt, an Irishman, a German and an Italian, were mainly responsible for the political demands. Tempers ran high and a brush with the troopers led to the hoisting of a blue flag of the "Republic of Victoria" above the stockade. Early in the morning of December 3rd, a small force of the Queen's troopers attacked the stockade and within twenty-five minutes the flag had been hauled down and the revolt was over.

An official inquiry into the diggers' grievances was ordered immediately, and on the basis of its recommendations the existing licence system was abolished and replaced by a far more equitable export duty on gold. In future the diggers were to be called to pay £1 a year for the right to dig, and payment of this fee also gave them the right to vote. How little interested the great majority of them were in political rights was illustrated by the elections two years later when only one in eight bothered to vote.

The alarm of the squatters and farmers, as well as other sections of colonial society at the prospect of the gold rushes, early gave way to complaints. Their labourers had melted away to seek fortune on the gold fields; squatters and farmers seemed to face ruin. But their complaints were short lived. The gold rushes brought a boom in which everyone profited, except the majority of the diggers. The squatters improvised and found that they could manage with far less labour than they had employed in the past. The farmers of South Australia and Tasmania were able to take advantage of greatly-enlarged markets. Prices soared and, while the storekeepers and publicans secured the main profit, the merchants, shipping firms and finally the landlords benefited considerably.

## *Origins and Legends*

Diggers squandered their new-found wealth in lavish spending and "drinks-all-round." Melbourne in the grip of the gold fever became a flamboyant city of opulence and display. Inevitably the boom burst; depression followed as the gold became scarcer and fortunes picked up on the diggings rarer. Three years after the announcement of the discovery of gold, a Victorian Gold Fields Commission reported that three quarters of the diggers made only "a narrow and precarious living."

Optimistic prospectors were still arriving on the fields to try their luck and the population of the fields continued to grow until 1858, but since the early days of the gold rushes a trickle of unlucky diggers had been flowing into the cities in search of work and steadily the trickle became a stream. In this way the gold rushes unleashed a new militant democracy in Australia for, disappointed on the gold fields, the diggers poured into the towns demanding land. They formed the rank and file of the new aggressive political agitation and quickly secured power, but in their attempts to secure land they were defeated by geography, economics and the land itself.

Apart from the value of gold mined—and, including the yields of other gold fields discovered after the first rushes, it had amounted to six hundred million pounds by 1916—the gold rushes had a tremendous effect on the subsequent development of the colony. They were responsible for the increase in population and in capital which opened a new era of expansion. The colony had been starved of population, and the news of gold brought a flood of migrants, raising the population from 405,000 to 1,145,000 in ten years. At first the newcomers were concentrated on the gold fields, but after a few years they flowed to the towns and country, swelling the labour force and developing and diversifying the middle classes. Roads and railways, schools and houses, warehouses and hospitals were built, and the humming activity attracted more settlers and more capital.

The gold rushes were also important for the powerful influence they exerted on the Australian character and outlook. Later generations have regarded this period as the genesis of their country, and "have acclaimed the diggers as their Pilgrim Fathers, the first authentic Australians, the founders of their self-respecting, independent, strenuous national life." This legend of the diggers distorts history and leads to a certain unbalance in the Australian outlook, but it has given Australians their ideal and has become part of their national character, differentiating them from other nations within and without the Commonwealth.

## *A New Nation*

The second half of the nineteenth century saw a great wave of development and expansion in the Australian colonies. It ebbed and flowed, but constantly advanced. The population of 400,000 in 1851 had become nearly four million in 1901; the area of cultivated land had reached ten million acres with a further fifteen million acres of planted pasture land. Seventeen million sheep in 1851 had become 106 million in 1891, although droughts from 1894 to 1902 reduced the number to nearly half.

Making use of the drought-resisting and quick-ripening wheats which William Farrer had evolved in the 'eighties, the wheat farmers increased their acreage, pushing the pastoralists outwards to the regions of the lower rainfall. The 'seventies and 'eighties were great railway building decades, and new lines opened up land for the wheat farmers. Towards the end of the century fresh incentives were given to the agricultural advance by the invention of refrigeration, making possible the export of Australian dairy products, meat and fruit.

The background to this expansion was one of noisy, often bitter political strife. Since its early days the colony had suffered from a cleavage in its society. At first it was between the emancipists and the exclusives. With the abolition of the penal system it gave way to another division which was deeper, more enduring and important. This was the division between the wealthy landowners and the labouring classes, between those who early in the history of the colony had acquired vast land holdings, and those who arrived later and lacking capital had not been able to acquire land of their own. Throughout the nineteenth century this land problem was at the root of all Australian political antagonisms.

It was both a class and an economic conflict. The landowners, who had shaped their lives on the model of the English rural gentry with its privileges and responsibilities, assumed political leadership as of right. Until the 1850's it was a fairly natural assumption, for the position of the pastoral industry was unchallenged and there was no other class sufficiently organised and politically conscious to lead. But the landed hegemony was strongly attacked by small pockets of opposition, and the attacks were strengthened by the support of the merchants who had not been admitted to partnership with the landowning gentry.

Nevertheless it was the landowning class which, after agitating against the land policy of the Imperial Government, went on to press for self-government. They achieved a measure of success in the Australian Colonies Government Act of 1850 and this Act, passed on the eve of the gold rushes, prepared the ground for the real political struggle.

## *Origins and Legends*

On the one hand were the established forces of wealth and property, led by William Charles Wentworth. These forces assumed the responsibilities and claimed the privileges of the English aristocracy, though often they sprang from no more noble loins than John Macarthur. On the other hand were the massive forces of "the common man" who claimed the dignity of true democrats, though many of them were no more than the flotsam of the old world who had come looking for easy wealth and had been disappointed on the gold fields.

The people of privilege tried to establish an hereditary aristocracy, and Wentworth drafted proposals for a colonial peerage which were rejected in Britain. The people of no privilege challenged the power of the older colonists, and brought in a series of Selection Acts which allowed those without land to select blocks and pay for them by instalments. Their proposals were rejected by nature.

The ideal of a yeoman agriculture with land for all gave rise to a mood of tremendous optimism, but the Selection Acts conflicted with the economic laws of the country which make small holdings workable only in the coastal belts and in certain other limited regions. The great sheep and cattle industries depended then, as now, on large holdings. The small selectors went bankrupt and the squatters regained the land. Though the big landholders apparently lost their political power to the superior numbers of the landless proletariat, the true centre of power in Australia was established by Macarthur and his brotherhood, and has never shifted.

The conquest and settlement of the Australian continent resulted from the effective pastoral and agricultural industries, and from the revolution in the means of transport. Sailing ships took four to five months to reach Australia, but in the second half of the nineteenth century this was reduced to an average of four weeks by the introduction of steamships and the opening of the Suez Canal. Developments in transport made an even greater difference inside Australia. The squatters surging westwards had covered enormous areas, but their daily advance had been no more than a few miles each day. The bullock teams which carried the wool in bales to the ports averaged less than twelve miles a day. Distances seemed to isolate the settlements from each other, and Western Australia seemed almost as far away to the people of Sydney as London.

Railways reduced the distances, bringing the colonies closer together and making them realise their community of interests. Questions of concern to all the colonies arose more frequently and the movement

## *A New Nation*

towards federation was born. It was promoted by no wave of aggressive nationalism, and it inspired neither wide enthusiasm nor great opposition. Joint interests, common history and similarity of outlook throughout the colonies were recognised as far greater than any differences. Federation was a matter of common sense and at the close of the nineteenth century the six colonies joined in the Federal Commonwealth of Australia.

Thus Australia entered the twentieth century as one nation, inhabiting all of one continent and peopled by one stock. Its brief history had been neither uneventful nor lacking in action and heroism, but it had involved no war of conquest and had made no tremendously challenging demands on the majority of its people.

Most Australians feel disappointed and even frustrated by their history. It seems to them to suffer from serious omissions. The North Americans had to fight the native Indians before they could conquer and possess their land. With the passing of time, the merest skirmish has become an heroic battle, and this has satisfied the longing which is alive in all peoples for a national tradition. The United States produces an endless flow of frontier films, bursting with adventure. Australia is forced back on its bushrangers (or highwaymen), and when films are made about them they are censored by authorities who feel that this is not a tradition of which to boast.

The liveliest imagination cannot make anything of the Australian natives. Two naked Aborigines opposed the landing of Captain Cook, and thereafter, apart from occasional attacks on individual settlers, the Aborigines fade from Australian history. The settlers cold-bloodedly killed them by shooting or by systematically giving them food containing arsenic. It is one of the shameful chapters in the history of the British peoples and, far from promoting a noble tradition, the Aborigines have left the white people with a lingering sense of shame.

Australia's history began on a note of anti-climax, for with her discovery the rich, centuries-old legends of the southern continent crumbled away. Britain settled the new land only under the compulsion of her own over-population, and the resulting colony was at first peopled with her rejects. It was a poor start, converted into something better by the ambition of an individualist who found a source of wealth for the colony in wool.

Shortage of population was an early problem, and remains one, but when the country did receive a sudden influx of settlers during the gold rushes, these migrants gave an urgency to the existing political discord. Although they failed to seize the power of property from the earlier,

## *Origins and Legends*

established landowners, their greater numbers gave them the illusion of political power—an illusion reinforced by the nineteenth century developments of universal franchise and trade unionism which were accepted in the colony more quickly than in the mother country. Federation gave Australia a national unity, within which this fundamental cleavage persisted.

It is interesting to note that neither of these two groups in Australia has ever been anxious to face the truth of history, which is perhaps a reason why important figures in the Australian story—such as Sturt—have been neglected; while comparatively unimportant events such as the Eureka Stockade have become the basis of dramatic legends.

The minority of Australians belong to the propertied class, and long for an aristocratic distinction which is not theirs. It is they who suffer most from convict taunts. The majority belong to the landless class who look back no farther than the gold rushes, and it is they who have built up the legends of the Eureka Stockade as symbolising the struggle for democracy, and of the Digger as their national ideal and prototype.

But the struggle for democracy was never a real struggle. The colonies, young, eager and impatient, demanded self-government and independence immediately; the Imperial Government instinctively delayed meeting their demands at least until they represented the will of the majority. Once the gold rushes had brought solidarity and political consciousness to the working masses, so that the agitation for full political rights did not emanate wholly from the landowning gentry, the Imperial Government granted self-government readily.

The Digger Legend has been one of the strongest influences in the formation of the national character and outlook of Australians. The legend distorts history and is a myth rather than a tradition. At the same time it has fostered the ideals of individual self-respect and independence, initiative and comradeship, so finely exemplified by the Australian forces in two world wars.

But the influence of this legend has not been all for the good. It has encouraged the cult of the common man which, more than any other factor, has suffocated originality and enthroned mediocrity in twentieth-century Australia. Even more important, the legend has helped to dull the pioneering spirit, for its ideal is static. It contrasts sadly with the active ideals of the American frontiersman and of the Russian questing in the Arctic wastes of Siberia—ideals which to-day inspire the youth of those countries to fresh achievement.

### *A New Nation*

This pioneering spirit is by no means dead in Australia, but it has little significance for the great majority, who have no link with the pioneers and are not directly descended from them. Their life has no connection with the land. The typical Australian has become a city dweller, tied to his factory, with a small house in suburbia. In essence he is the offspring of the boisterous diggers rather than of the pioneers who conquered the continent.

## THE LANDSCAPE I

---

*The growth of the cities has been the most obvious—and, to many, the most disturbing—aspect of Australia's development in the twentieth century. In particular, the cities of Sydney and Melbourne have swollen until between them they contain almost a third of the nation's people. Sydney ranks second in size, and Melbourne third in the British Commonwealth's list of white cities. The other state capitals—Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart—are smaller but equally dominant in their own states. And cities can make a people soft. That is the haunting fear.*

*Economiists are not as worried about this as sociologists. They point out that all nations are becoming increasingly urbanised. Australia is unsuited to peasant development, and as the economy becomes more mature so the primary industries need a diminishing share of the total labour force. Those who live in the cities are unashamedly in love with them, and with the urban way of life. Colin Wills, author of Australian Passport, and well known in Britain as a perceptive broadcaster of the world scene, describes the Australian cities in most of which he has lived and worked at various times. His story opens as the sun rises and a new working day begins in Sydney, capital of New South Wales.*



# As Most People See It

COLIN WILLS

**Y**OU WAKE, and there's the morning flowing in at your windows, cool and clear as glass. The sweet-pea blossoms brush against the window frame, swayed by a light breeze. A bee floats into the room and darts out again. There's a smell of dewy grass and earth; the lawn and the flower-beds are level with your floor, or nearly so. And now the sun is level with your eyes, flashing across the neighbours' gardens, bright and uncompromising. There's no point in staying there any longer, with that light in your eyes. You might as well get up.

Down the passage to the bathroom, and the cold shower wakes you up completely, and for a moment the bewildered brain is full of work and worries. But as you open the door there's the smell of bacon and the clank of a kettle, and you can't worry too long.

It's all on one floor; everything's on one floor; you live horizontally here, not vertically; and the light and the air flow all around the house and in at all the windows. There's your garden and theirs between you and the neighbours on either side, and the red-tiled roofs of the one-storey houses are so low you can see the sky all around you, and it's clear, and bright, and blue.

The houses . . . yes, the houses are pretty ordinary and monotonous; no architectural character to speak of, and certainly no period pieces, except for a few examples of that appalling period just before the first war when they filled the front doors with stained glass in *art nouveau* designs. But *what does it matter?* Look at the sky! Look at the roses!

There are two places on the way to the station that are rather wonderful. One is an avenue of jacaranda trees. The branches are hung with heliotrope blossoms like bells, so like bells that you expect to hear them ringing, with a soft, heliotrope chime. The pavement is strewn with the fallen blossoms, a coloured pool about each tree. You hesitate to walk there, but others are already treading on them; the well-shod feet clacking on the pavement, falling more softly where the flowers lie; the well-pressed suits; the fresh soft collars around sunburned necks; the grey felt hats.

## *As Most People See It*

The other place is a triangle of waste ground where gum-trees grow. For a moment, as you pass, as the breeze sways the light branches with their sheaves of hanging leaves, grey-green, sickle-shaped, vertical; the suburbs vanish and it is the bush, the remote inland. You see the dust rising in the distance as cattle move across the plain; dogs darting at their heels and whips cracking, and a red haze over the sun.

Then it's the asphalt path down to the station; tickets, newspapers, a crowd waiting, men watching the girls in summer frocks, schoolboys chasing each other among the fixed rocks of adult humanity . . . and the train coming in.

The train slides out over the dim edge of the North Shore, on to the bridge approach, and shoots into the sky. The girders go by with a swishing echo, their edges glittering in the high light; the great arc of steel rises above you unseen. Far below, the surface of the harbour lies like rippled silk. A steamer is passing under the bridge, with clots of black smoke heaving out of its funnels; an old and dingy island steamer, rusty and salty and luminous with romance. Its holds would smell of copra if you were close, and its wake would whisper of palms and the surf of the south seas.

Down the harbour a grey ferry-steamer is crossing, lonely and forlorn. Once, before the bridge was built, it was all ferries, grey ovals crammed with people, converging on Circular Quay as the grey felt hats converge. It was pleasant to travel to town that way; you went to sea every morning between the breakfast table and the desk, smelt seaweed, and saw gulls settle on oily waves, and heard the clang of engine-room telegraph bells.

Far off across the blue water the lovely shores curve away, bay, point and bay, point and bay. Green, wooded hills on the north shore, red roofs among the trees, and on the south, along the peninsula that sweeps away to the Heads, the terraced gardens with white mansions and shady trees, and blocks of flats forever encroaching, thrusting up to the crest of the peninsula and down to the water's edge.

Along the shore are swimming pools, and lawns, and anchorages for yachts. This afternoon, for it is Saturday, the sailing-boats will be out; the long blue harbour will be flecked with white sails. And on the other side, the seaward side of the peninsula, and far off to the north and to the south, the crowds will gather on twenty miles of wide, white, sandy beaches, and every roller will carry like arrows the surf-riders in to shore, and on the sand, in the sun, will spread a labyrinth of golden limbs.

The trams and the streams of cars will carry other crowds to cricket

## *The Landscape*

and the races, and the trains going back to the suburbs will bristle with golf clubs and tennis rackets, and parcels of plants and seeds. The city will be quiet in the afternoon, with only tourists strolling the hot streets and family parties in the Botanic Gardens and idle chaps gently moving on with jokes and gesticulations from bar to cool, bare bar.

There will be a rush again towards sunset, when the returning punters and cricket fans pass through the city homeward, and then a lull before the neon signs begin to glare and dim the evening light, and the crowds stream in to theatres and cinemas and dancehalls. Then the lights will shine through the flickering leaves of the plane-trees above the café awnings of the "Little Paris" about King's Cross and Macleay Street, where people stroll beside the streams of shining cars.

Quieter, softer lights will shine from windows and verandas out in the suburbs, where people sit peacefully sniffing the garden smells. And the white glare of arc-lamps, unsoftened by any trees, will make lurid patches among the shadows along the narrow streets of slum terraces, where men in singlets sit with their wives on the doorsteps, seeking coolness, and where lovers embrace on the wooden box that covers the gas-meter on a two-foot wide front porch. And the sound of the city will come humming through the night.

But that is to come. It is morning: bright, noisy Saturday morning, and you have crossed the bridge into town, and plunged into the underground and rumbled through the tunnels into the centre, and come up again into daylight.

To the west and south lie the long streets of warehouses, the wool stores, the commercial docks, the oily mouths of two green rivers that flow into the harbour, gas works and petrol stores, and the white towers of silos full of wheat. Through this smudged, clamorous quarter of the town pass all the goods that every great port swallows, digests or regurgitates; all that a great and growing nation draws in from the sea routes of the world, all that a land of plenty puts forth to the world. But overshadowing all are wool and wheat.

Once you have wandered through the warehouse streets of Sydney you will remember always the smell of greasy wool, and the yellow flashing streams of wheat pouring into the hungry holds of ships. When you smell wool in Bradford you will remember those hot streets under the sun, and the cavernous dark doorways of Victorian warehouses from which came wafting the reek of the tumbling bales. One day in the docks of London Pool or Hamburg, as the wheat flows out of the ships, you will remember that far away dockside where it flowed in. You will remember

## *As Most People See It*

the white gulls wheeling among the pigeons, and the sparrows pecking the grains among the dust and the dung.

The narrow streets that wind up from Circular Quay into the town between the pubs and the little shops and the dimly baroque façades of the turn of the century, wind as they do because they grew from the wagon tracks up which the first colonists hauled their goods from the ships. As you follow their twists and turns, you will recall that you are dodging this way or that to avoid a great tree, a mass of rocks, or the swampy bed of a stream. It is, after all, little more than a century and a half since those first ships of Europe let go their rusty anchors in the great harbour at the end of the earth. Yet, in the Australian scene, a century and a half suggests remote antiquity.

You turn north now, to where the narrow streets run straight and parallel for a mile or more through towering walls of stone, thunderous canyons cutting through the mass of masonry that grew up in a century on the foundations of wool and wheat and gold. Great buildings rise here, tall and square against the sky, flashing the light of morning back from innumerable windows. The concrete buildings show dead white as chalk in the fierce beam of the sun, but those of granite, or of pale golden sandstone, glitter as though with particles of mica. They flame and shimmer in the crystal light, and so dazzle the eye that at last the whole city seems a brilliant mirage, imagined in the empty wilderness.

But the geometrical towers against the sky are real enough, and the people at work behind their walls of stone and glass; people who probably have never seen, and will never see, the naked nomads wandering the desert, or a kangaroo outside a zoo, or heard the screech of white cockatoos in flight, or the honk of wild swans. It is the wilderness that is the mirage here.

Factories stretch out along the dusty streets of the metropolitan fringe, and along the roads that lead into the country. Great stores flank the crowded pavements; the traffic roars past banks and bars, newspaper offices, trade union offices and the university, churches and breweries, the parks with their flowers and fountains, the beauty parlours, the public libraries and the dog tracks. It has all happened in a moment, as history is measured, but it has happened. It is there to see and to touch, a perceptible phenomenon.

What is more, it is still happening.

Among the stone towers, skeleton towers of steel are forever rising to scrape the sky; concrete pours over fresh clearings in coastal bush

## *The Landscape*

beyond the city fringes, and far off in the hills, to make new factories, dams, and power-houses.

But all this is only one expression of a great spring of energy that bursts forth here. You can feel it yourself, in your muscles and your mind. You can sense it in university lecture-rooms and laboratories, belying the cynical flippancy. You can hear it in the clicking of typewriters in a thousand bed-sitting rooms, and see it in neat drawing offices and untidy studios. When you walk down Macquarie Street, between the brass plates of the doctors and the lawns fringed with palms, it comes humming through the air from the Conservatorium of Music, where Heaven knows how many Graingers and Benjamins of the spirit span the keys, and where the eager voices of youth soar eternally seeking the magic of Melba.

They sing, they spring through the air in the ballet schools, they model in clay and they model in mannequin shows; they build new roads and fly new planes on new air routes. They talk their politics and philosophy with a tone unknown in Europe—the tone of sublime and impudent confidence belonging to those who believe they can build a new world.

If I have written so much of one city, it is because it is the one I know most intimately. But most of what I have written is true of them all. Yet every one of the six state capitals has its clear entity, its individual colour and texture, its subtle and secret touch on the eye and the heart.

Hobart I do not know; what a fool a man is to go looking at other continents before he has seen an island state belonging to his own. But it is certainly charming, for so many different kinds of people are charmed by it. Some tell me it is very English. One man, long ago, told me that every house has a brass doorstep. If this is not so, I would rather not hear about it.

Perth I know only as a passer-by, but who that has passed by that delightful city could fail to keep its picture very clear in mind? It is so small to be the capital of so vast a state, so brisk and busy to reflect the life of the enormous West that moves at the pace of the seasons. Mistress of deserts, Perth grows green gardens by the river; queen of unbounded pastures, she marks her urban area in neat small streets and squares; capital of a land that rolls from tropic seas to the Southern Ocean, she maintains a close-knit society of quiet and cultured tastes, where people write their own music, stage their own plays, form their own sharply-defined ideas of the world quite independently of the big cities of the East. For this is in all things the capital of the West, guarding traditions and formulating plans that belong to the West alone.

## *As Most People See It*

It is nothing to these people to stand up against the rest of the Commonwealth on an issue of principle, even to the point of talking of secession. In fact, of course, secession is impossible; the rest of Australia would never let the West go. It is too precious; it stands for the very independence the whole nation holds sacred.

And, though its own metropolitan society is so urban and orderly, the whole West walks the streets of Perth—the farmers of vast wheat-fields that stretch horizon-wide, the cattlemen whose grazing goes over the edge of distance, the pearlers from lonely coasts where the sunset blazes amethyst and green over the Indian Ocean, gold miners who work some of the richest lodes on earth, and prospectors who wander the deserts to find here and there a handful of precious dust.

Adelaide lies apart from both West and East, where two great gulfs cleave inland from the centre of the continent's southern coastline. Her commerce is with those gulfs (though the city itself lies a little way from the sea) and with the wine lands and farmlands of the great Murray Valley, with the rich pastures of South Australia itself, and the vast, dry cattle country of Central and Northern Australia.

In Adelaide, as elsewhere, the age throws up its high buildings of concrete and steel and stone, and eventually it, too, will be a tall city full of the tall tales of the twentieth century. But to-day it is still largely a pleasant Australian town, two or three storeys high, with many white buildings glaring in the sun or hiding in hot shade, with iron roofs still to be seen among the towers of commerce, and with awnings jutting from all the shops over the pavements where people stroll at a sagely leisurely pace. For in summer the wind is hot and dusty from the desert, and the citizens do not kill themselves in toil.

When the day's work is over they can drive up into the hills, among the orchards, and look down and watch the city appear out of the dusk as a rectangular pattern of light. Adelaide is one of the most perfectly rectangular cities on earth, its criss-crossing streets broken only by an orderly arrangement of squares. But this plan of the famous Colonel Light's designing is saved from the dullness of the merely mathematical by the Colonel's excellent device of surrounding the square mile of metropolis with a half-mile wide belt of green parklands, beyond which the suburbs begin.

They are peaceful suburbs, perfumed at evening and morning with many gardens, and the citizens not content with their own gardens can walk through those that border the small and pretty River Torrens.

At the week-end, as in every Australian capital, people make for the

## *The Landscape*

sea. For Adelaide people this means travelling a few miles to the shores of Spencer's Gulf, where quiet waves ripple against the sand and where the evening light, after the glaring heat of day, has a lovely violet quality that evokes the atmosphere of dreams.

Queensland is my native state, and I must suppose it is partly something in my bones that makes me feel life moves there in a way you will not find the like of anywhere else. There is a peculiar sense of freedom about it, and an original radical philosophy in the way people look at things. They are critical and scornful, and at the same time enthusiastic and humorous, and while they can be passionate in argument, there is a salt in their sap that stops them from taking themselves, or anyone else, too seriously. The fact that Irish blood is abundant there may have something to do with it.

This element in their nature affects the atmosphere of their capital. Brisbane, although it has a mature metropolitan tang to it, is nevertheless very much a Queensland town. Queen Street and Adelaide Street are long, and glittering and busy, and their sides are already steep and growing steeper. But the crowds are Queensland crowds; their rendezvous are casual; they have an easy manner and a frank regard.

The world comes close to Brisbane, as it does to the much greater city of Sydney; big ships come up the broad river to Pinkenbah, and ships quite big enough to remind men of the world beyond Moreton Bay steam up into the city itself, for the river curves around its streets and terraces in noble sweeps and reaches.

There is a transparency in the atmosphere that makes the simplest images vivid . . . the glitter of traffic rolling over Victoria Bridge; people walking in the Botanic Gardens, suburban streets climbing the hills; the older, wooden houses standing up on piles, the space beneath surrounded with lattice on which flowering creepers grow. And on Saturday and Sunday, those pleasure boats and yachts and launches moving out across Moreton Bay.

But there's one picture above all that comes back to you when you remember Brisbane—the season when in the quiet streets all around the town, the jacarandas and the flame trees are in bloom together. Then the whole scene is veiled with floating curtains of colour, a mist of pale heliotrope splashed with vermilion flames.

That one remembers—that and the night, when the brilliant stars drench the earth with light, and the gardens fill the air with drifting fragrance. Then the mind seems to swim away on the warm wind, away across the vast spaces of the land, away to the silver seas of Capricorn.

### *As Most People See It*

A thousand miles to the south the night is cooler, and the stars, though brilliant still, are a little more remote. They flood away in torrents of icy light to the world that lies below the curve of the Southern Ocean. Perhaps because the sky does not burn so near the earth nor the earth pour out such effusions of colour and perfume, the life of Melbourne has more strongly the character of something designed and sustained by men. In this, it is more European than any other city of Australia.

Little more than a century ago—in 1835—John Batman landed on the shores of Port Phillip at the head of a party of adventurous empire-builders from Tasmania. They were mostly business men (the party included, for instance, two who go down in history described as drapers) and they set about things in a businesslike way by buying a large tract of land from the Aborigines in exchange for blankets, tomahawks and flour. This purchase was repudiated by Governor Darling, of New South Wales, whose territory then included all Eastern Australia, but the settlement stayed and its history has been businesslike ever since.

There was also a note of modesty and caution in its beginnings, along with abounding confidence, which seems to have set the tone. There is a tradition that Batman, gazing upon the stretch of bushland which is now Melbourne, remarked: "This is a fine site for a village." In a century his village was a city of a million souls, one of the greatest in the Southern Hemisphere, with a vast trade including the export of thirty-five per cent of Australia's wool—or about a tenth of the wool of the world.

The light here in the south is softer, more changing; except in high summer there is a continual music of brilliance and shadow playing over the solid square masses of the great blocks of buildings, so that now they have an adamant gleam, and now a softened outline and a dim glow. The wide streets, rectilinear in plan, stretching away to vistas of trees and spires and coppery domes, shimmer in summer haze, float in mist, flash with the splash of rainstorms or seem to extend to infinity in the tender sunshine of spring.

The business crowds, the idle promenaders, have more formality in dress and manner than the Sydney crowds, though no less colour. They have a somewhat sober air, a little of the reserve of English city crowds. But the faces never have the tense look, the look of a universal *angst*, that sometimes seems to haunt a whole streetful of people in European cities. Their air reflects as wholly Australian an outlook as the free, casual air of the strollers in Brisbane or Perth, but with a difference. Perhaps they are more self-consciously metropolitan people.



## *The Landscape*

With the sobriety, the solidity, that seems to belong to people as well as buildings, there is a great gusto of good living, as there was among the Victorian English. There have always been more good restaurants, more comfortable taverns, in Melbourne than elsewhere in the country, and the rich burgesses, with the rich squatters who come to town to spend a portion of their wool cheques, go in for private entertainment on a scale not exceeded in any of the other capitals where gaiety, is, perhaps, more superficially evident.

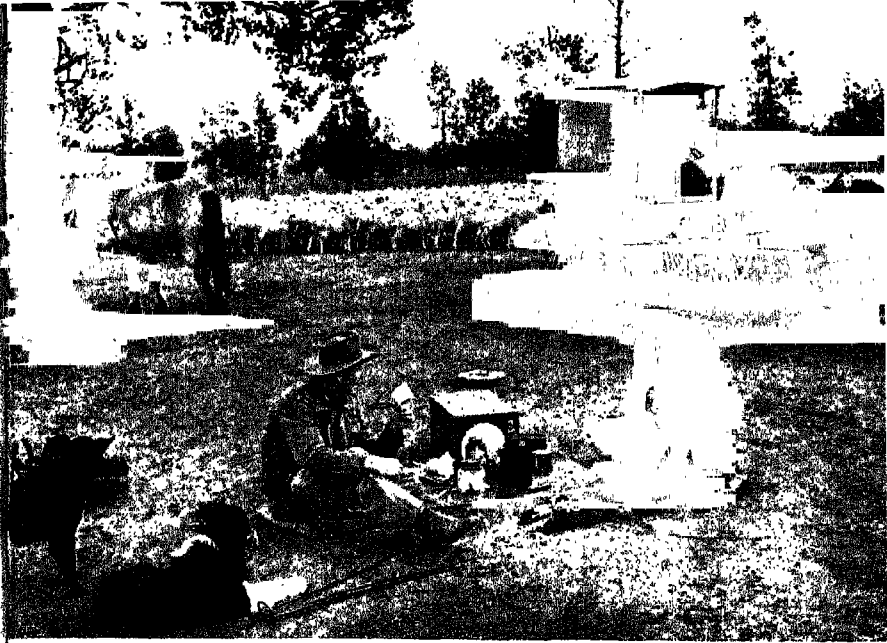
The masses enjoy life with few inhibitions. Dancing by night, picnicking in the country or by the sea at the week-end, and flocking to football and the races, they scorn any suggestion by rival cities that Melbourne is dull and puritanical. Puritanical influences are crudely evident here as everywhere in the continent, but nowhere have they much real effect on the ordinary citizen except to provoke him to ribaldry.

There is a dignity about Melbourne that is not a matter of elegant town-planning, nor of fashion and manners. It comes rather from an inner seriousness. In science, in scholarship, in the arts, the achievements of this young city have been great, and perhaps they weigh more with the mass of the people than such things do elsewhere in Australia.

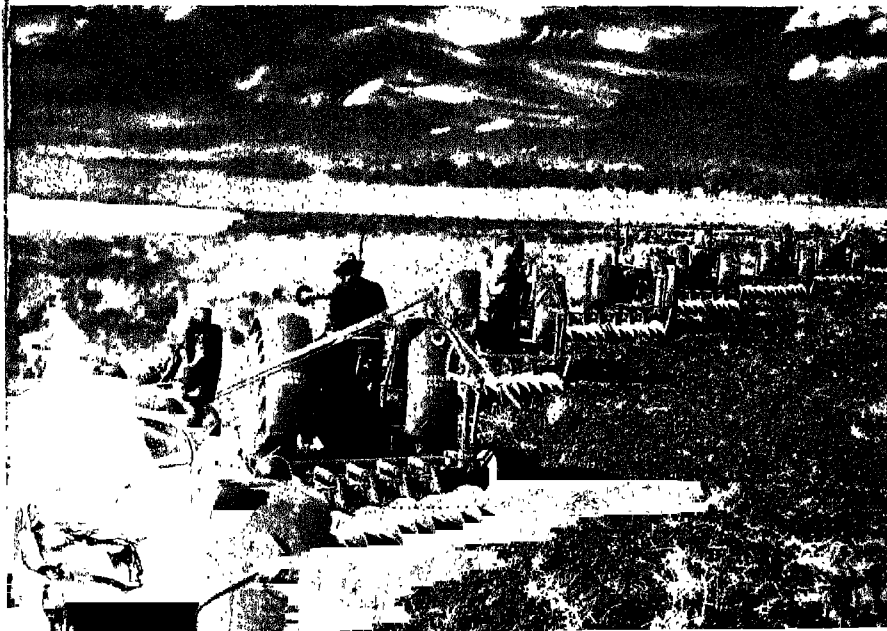
But to me the allure of this city lies in the poetry of the place, an elusive quality that seems to be accidental. Square, solid and commercial, with its suburbs stretching away over a dim plain and its much-maligned little river, the Yarra, as its sole geographical feature of interest, Melbourne might seem the most matter-of-fact and obvious place in the country. Yet there is something—is it in the light, or the air, or in some secret emanation from generations of quiet lives and conventional exteriors?—which makes the scenes of day and night, the sunny, windy, foggy, rainy seasons, extraordinarily exciting.

To see the great grey bulk of the cathedral floating in a mist . . . to walk for miles along the streets of Victorian stone residences with their small grass plots enclosed in railings of iron . . . to stand in the roaring square before Flinders Street Station, to cross the river to the boarding-houses and winding streets of South Yarra, and to slither down wet Bourke Street, whipped by the wind, with the great bulk of warehouses flashing in the lamplight . . . these simple, meaningless things can move you strangely.

Is it simply that, through no conscious act of John Batman or any of the good businesslike burghers who have followed him, Melbourne, the place itself, has become a city with a soul? Or is it that Melba and the



*COUNTRY METHODS, old and new. (Above) A drover, a cook and two dogs : together they may move a mob of sheep many hundreds of miles. (Below) Large-scale mechanised farming is possible in the huge, unfenced paddocks*





*AN ABORIGINAL of the Ooldea tribe, Northern Territory*

### *As Most People See It*

musicians, and the poets and the painters, and the young men who went off to cricket fields and battlefields abroad, have all thrown back on the walls of the straight streets something of their own light?

If there is an answer it is no use seeking it from the Melbournians moving sedately through the crowd, or strolling idly in the avenues and the parks. They will only ask you to have a beer and forget it. They are not concerned about it. They take it for granted.

Most Australians live in the cities, or in the towns and farmlands that form a broad strip of country round the southern and eastern sides of the continent.

This long-settled, well-developed Australia varies greatly; the only features common to most of it are the fertile, well-stocked dairy farms, the wheat fields, and the small grazing properties that seem almost English by comparison with the great stations of the inland. It is a green and gold country of grain and grass, broken by stretches of scrub and forest, by fruit farms, by mining valleys, ridges and mountains, by torrents and by slow, brown rivers that dry up in summer. The farm-houses, once you get beyond the centres where bricks are easy to come by, are of wood, with roofs of corrugated iron; the houses are low and wide, with big verandas, and the roofs are sharp-angled and bordered with gutters to catch the precious rain in iron tanks.

The country towns, too, conform in general to a familiar pattern; wooden buildings and brick, with iron roofs, and with iron awnings over the pavements to shade shopfronts and shoppers from the sun. They tend to ramble without any particular form, but as they grow, they grow self-conscious, and squares and public gardens are laid out, and rows of modern buildings two or three storeys high. Chrome and glass and plastic creep into the hotels, shaming the old, uncomfortable, picturesque pubs . . . the "Railway," the "Commercial" and the "Royal."

But the life of these towns does not change much. There are shinier, bigger cars where once there were Model T Fords, and once, before that, buggies and sulkies and spring-carts. The farmers call now at the radio dealer's, as well as at the store, the produce merchant's and the bank. Their wives may spend a while at a beauty parlour, and their children at a soda fountain, where once it was the dressmaker's or the sweet shop. But a country-town dance is still the same delightful, heartfelt affair it always was, even if Buddy Rafferty and his Legionnaires have replaced the old piano, fiddle and concertina. And if the man whose sheep fetched top price at the sales is interviewed now by a smart chap with a microphone, from the local radio station, instead of just by young Charlie

## *The Landscape*

from the local paper, it is still the taciturn approval of his peers in the real bar that affords him the real glory.

Away to the north of Brisbane this intermediate land between the coastal towns and "the real bush" takes on a different character, for North Queensland is something quite on its own—hot, happy, rich and robust, still somewhat uncomfortable with brick walls and stiff collars, given more to vast verandas and wide hats. It has its corn and its dairying, but it is also a land of bananas and sugar-cane and pineapples, and even its most formal towns have a touch of the tropics.

The city people, the country-town people, and the farmers, all turn to the coast in their times of leisure; and the coast, all the way round from the Great Barrier Reef off North Queensland to Subiaco in Western Australia, is lovely, lazy and delightful.

Great stretches of it are wild and free of any settlement. There are beaches where you can walk for miles over sand as white and fine as salt, marked only by the delicate tracks of sea-birds. Big seaports are few, and the rest are quiet, sunlit places where life is leisurely. Here and there the coast is broken by great bays, the inlets of lagoons and lakes, and the estuaries of rivers. Between the coast and the foothills of the Great Dividing Range lies a rich strip of land that forms, when seen from the heights, a splendid pattern of colour.

But though they love the sea, the coast dwellers turn away from it sometimes and make for the mountains. Here there are crags to climb, and paths to follow around the face of the bluffs, where cataracts fall in veils of silver foam, and where cliffs of orange and crimson plunge into valleys brimming with purple shadow.

And in the highest mountains of all, Mount Kosciusko and the Australian Alps on the borders of New South Wales and Victoria, is the one region of the continent where snow is to be seen. Snow comes as a rare phenomenon in other lofty places, but here it falls every year and lies so deep that crowds come in the season for winter sports.

There are no towns in the high mountains, and only a very few small settlements. It is a wilderness of snow, blazing with sunshine. Two kinds of people only are seen in that land in winter—skiers and sheep-herders of the upland ranges.

Between Kosciusko and Sydney, in the midst of rolling sheep country, you can turn aside to visit the last city, the smallest, and unexpectedly the national capital—Canberra. It was to avoid jealousy between existing cities that a new one was created as the seat of government, and the Federal Parliament sat there for the first time in 1927.

### *As Most People See It*

The ambitious town plan is still largely uncompleted, except for the sewerage system which could cope with ten times the present population. People from Sydney or Melbourne, scornful of the open country which lies between the scattered suburbs, refer to it as "a good sheep station spoilt," or "the world's only cemetery lit up at night." But most of them have a sneaking envy for its freshness and sparkling cleanliness.

There is no particular reason why Canberra should ever be a centre of trade or industry, and perhaps that is an advantage. It is simply a place in the midst of pleasant country to which legislators come when Parliament is in session, and where permanent secretariats work far from the distractions of the great cities. It is also the site of the ambitious new National University which hopes to become a world centre of post-graduate studies.

Among green undulations and disciplined formal gardens, Canberra's white buildings of an agreeable, innocent, and uninspired style express Australia's complete lack of any popular passion for statesmanship. Political convictions are strong in this country, but not the conviction that a seat of government generates or fructifies the life of the land. It merely reflects.

And yet, inside the Parliament building, the sense of isolation and of garden-city artificiality disappears altogether. Here, Canberra becomes Australia. As each member speaks you feel that you are listening to a living part of the people—to this town, that wheat belt, that stretch of the cattle country, or to tradition or wealth, or the liberal point of view, or to the docks or the mines or the shop on the street corner. The change is much the same as when you enter a theatre seeing it as a dusty baroque building, and leave it seeing it as a box from which came life. Australia is like that. You are always encountering the naïve, the quick, and the new, and finding afterwards a flavour and texture in things that satisfies unexpected appetites. This last and littlest city, this city yet unformed, is already drawing something from the soil and the sun, something which made the others.



## THE LANDSCAPE II

---

*Outside the cities lies a world which fascinates the urban Australian, but in an entirely academic way. He reads about it (and by far the most successful authors in the home market are garrulous bush writers such as Ion Idriess and Frank Clune), talks about it, buys paintings of it, but never goes to see it for himself. His short holidays are spent by the seaside, his long holidays on trips abroad. As a result, most rural hotels remain fossilised specimens of early pioneer life, and the casual tourist who seeks first-hand knowledge of the outback often exposes himself to a contrived crudity of material discomfort which is quite out of proportion to the natural wonders he will see.*

*The city dweller sneers at these pubs, and offers them as the reason why he does not travel in his own country. But the pubs are a reflection of, not the cause of, his lack of interest. One seldom hears an Australian say, "I would like to see Alice Springs," until he has spent a long time overseas and been faced with a multitude of questions about his own country which he cannot answer. A rare Australian, then, is Jack McLaren who has worked his way through vast areas of the outback and written a classic book about it, *My Crowded Solitude*.*



# *As Few People See It*

JACK McLAREN

**E**VEN AMONG Australians, there are comparatively few of us with personal experience of certain great sections of our homeland. As the continent is about thirty-three times as large as Great Britain, this is understandable. To the man in Melbourne, the region around the Gulf of Carpentaria, two thousand miles away in Northern Queensland, might almost be a foreign country.

It so happens that I have travelled and worked in various of these remote regions. One is the district known as the Kimberleys, in the north-west of Western Australia. Once famous for its goldfields, the Kimberleys is now cattle country, and characteristically empty and lonely. In the whole of its immensity there are only two places large enough to be called townships—Derby and Wyndham, with hundreds of miles between them and each with only a few score inhabitants.

I travelled there in a steamer which visited the coast once a month. Her name was the "Koolinda," and the day she arrived at a port was called a "Koolinda day." At both Derby and Wyndham the entire population assembled on the jetty to meet us. Even the aeroplane and wireless have not removed the loneliness and isolation of these people, hungry not merely for news but for the sight of other human beings, and so the arrival of a ship is still, in this air-conscious age, their great event of the month.

A few whites are dotted about on the Kimberleys' enormous ranges. There is a sprinkling of Aborigines, some helping the white men with their cattle work, some—poor remnants of humanity—hanging about the townships and mining camps and cadging where they can, others living their bush lives more or less as their race has done for centuries.

North of the Kimberleys is Port Darwin, capital of the Northern Territory, a half million square miles which were once part of the state of South Australia but since 1911 have been under Federal control. With the development of aviation, Darwin, where planes from Europe first land on Australian soil, saw a noble future as an international airport.

### *As Few People See It*

But air travellers leave quickly and spend little. It is quite possible that airliners might eventually by-pass Darwin, which would put it back in the past again without ever having known the future of its dreams.

Meanwhile there the town stands on a high headland in the heart of the tropics, sixteen hundred air-miles from Adelaide, overlooking a spacious harbour where pearly luggers come and go. There are smaller sail-craft that search the coral reefs of the coast for sea-slugs called *bêche-de-mer* or *trepang*, much valued in China and elsewhere as a table delicacy. Every so often a liner on the Singapore-Sydney run appears, or an Australian coastal steamer.

A stair cut in the rock of the headland's side leads up to the town, the whole of the way gorgeously alive with red hibiscus and flowering shrubs, all self-sown. But the town is as drab as most Australian outback townships, except for the population which is a wonderful mixture of races. Though there are only some two thousand residents, they include at least forty races. There are Malays, Kanakas and Australian Aborigines and all manner of cross-breeds of these races. I remember in Darwin's cinema—where I sat in a deck-chair in the open air and hoped it would not rain—looking at the audience of so many languages and wondering how much of the film's single language was really understood. No doubt there was a good deal of guessing.

To the east of Darwin is a tract of 32,000 square miles known as Arnhem Land. At one time anyone was free to travel there, though few did; the country offered little prospect of fortune, and the Aborigines were notoriously dangerous. As a *bêche-de-mer* fisherman on the Arnhem Land coast I was myself more than once in peril from them. Nowadays no one may enter the area without special permission—a rule imposed not for the traveller's protection, but for the benefit of the Aborigines. That great area has been set aside as an exclusive reserve for the blacks, where they may live their tribal lives as free as possible from outside interference.

The majority of Australians have never seen a full-blooded Aboriginal, yet the blacks, numbering some forty-seven thousand, are the country's oldest inhabitants. Their exact origin seems to have been lost in the mists of antiquity, except that they would appear to have been forced south out of India by peoples of superior culture.

Ethnologically, they are among the world's most interesting people. In this age of science and progress, the Aborigines of Arnhem Land have remained far back in the stone age. They wear little or no clothing. Nomadic wanderers, they grow nothing, but live by the chase and what

## *The Landscape*

they can find in the way of wild fruits and tubers. They build no proper dwellings, only temporary shelters of bushes and bark. I have seen many of these shelters, called *mia-mias*, so low to the ground that entrance can be made only on hands and knees.

Their weapons are spears, clubs and—in many districts, but not all—their curious invention the boomerang. In coastal areas they have rough bark or dug-out canoes, which they use for fishing and for hunting sea-turtles and dugongs—a kind of sea cow. At bushcraft they are superb, and can easily follow tracks invisible to a white man's eyes.

They are adept at sending messages over long distances by means of smoke signals. In 1914, near the tip of Cape York, in far-northern Queensland, where I lived for eight years in Aboriginal country, I learnt of the outbreak of world war through these smoke-messages relayed from one blacks' camp to another along the coast. All I could see was a distant column of smoke, but an Aboriginal read its tidings with ease.

In their wild state the blacks know little or nothing of work as we know it, and would appear to be hopelessly lazy. But, having captured and eaten their food, it seems to them, logically enough, there is no point in further activity until they need food again. As people who live by what comes to hand they live in the present and have small interest in providing for the future. The future is simply something with which the present has not caught up.

They are active enough, however, when it comes to rites and ceremonies. I have seen the curious ritual when a young girl's incisor tooth is knocked out with a stone by one of the Old Men of the tribe, while the girl is held down by some of the women. The only reason I could discover for this barbaric procedure was a scowling statement by one of those who held her. "It's so she can drink-im water more better," I was told, which clearly was no real reason at all. Evidently it was a matter into which one should not inquire too closely.

The "Bora" ceremonies of initiation are held in some secluded part of the bush, and have rarely been seen by whites. Much mysterious ceremonial use is made of an instrument called a "Bullroarer," a flat piece of polished wood that is whirled at the end of a cord to make a deep, humming sound. There is something awesome in its roar, even to a white man, and from the first moment of hearing it all the females in the tribe hide in the bush. Many of them believe the roaring to be the voice of a fearsome devil.

They have corroborees—male dances in which there is much prancing and stamping, with the faces and bodies of the dancers marked with

### *As Few People See It*

white clay to give a skeleton-like effect against the darkness of their skins. At Croker Island, near the border of Arnhem Land, I once watched scores of blacks thus prance a whole night through. Their dance-ground was thick with twisted, near-white ti-trees, which might also have been people, though *strangely immobile*. *Here and there were numbers of watching blacks, grouped in the smoke of small fires to keep off the mosquitoes and sand-flies.* Their dogs—wretched, dingo-like creatures—wandered around, now and then snarling at one another like wolves. There was a bright moon, but the strong south-east trade wind sent clouds scurrying across it, allowing only a fitting light to the scene. And every now and then a man at one of the fires blew wailing notes on a sort of massive flute called a didgeri-doo. Watching, I felt that civilisation was far away indeed—not merely in terms of distance, but of time. I, a man of this progressive age, was back with primordial people.

Yet, stone-age savages though the bush blacks are, some with past reputations for treacherous attacks on whites, it is my experience that they are in the main kindly, straightforward people who make reliable friends. A great quality of affection is theirs. They are extremely considerate of their old people and their children, and capable of making great sacrifices for one another. It is simply the need of understanding, for white men often despise them and the Aborigines sense this and inwardly withdraw. In this way their true nature is hidden. The Aboriginal a white man sees is often far different from the man his fellow Aboriginal knows.

Near their Arnhem Land reserve there was at least one enterprise which, had it succeeded, would have civilised the area and made it widely known long since. This was early in the nineteenth century, at a place called Port Essington, on the north-western edge, when a town was founded by a military regiment and convicts from far-off Tasmania, then called Van Diemen's Land. But fevers and a multitude of other adverse circumstances were too much for this hopeful and courageous attempt to settle a wild and unknown land, and in 1838 the town was abandoned.

In the course of my travels I came across all that remains of it to-day—some brick and stone ruins and broken gravestones three parts lost in the jungle. I photographed what I could of the gravestones, tried in vain to decipher their worn inscriptions, and noted how some Aborigines a little before my coming had used the spot as a camping place. No doubt the ancestors of those Aborigines had used it thus generations

## *The Landscape*

before the soldiers from Van Diemen's Land arrived. The wheel had come full circle.

South of Arnhem Land is a town whose name is quite well known but which no one ever visits. This is Borroloola on the bank of a river flowing into the mighty Gulf of Carpentaria. Here in the eighteenth-seventies came teamsters in large numbers to transport ship-loads of poles, wire and other materials for the construction of the great telegraph line that runs south from Darwin right across Australia.

That started a prosperous township; and after the telegraph line was completed Borroloola flourished as principal port of call on a bush highway from Queensland to the goldfields of Western Australia. The population was many hundreds, of all kinds and conditions of men. Then a decline set in and became so complete that when I visited the place there was only an hotel, a store and a population of nine. Since my visit I have never met anyone who has been to Borroloola, though I know any number who have heard of it. They know it for having, quaintly, a lot of o's in its name and as the smallest township in Australia.

Farther south is Alexandra Downs cattle station, which, with an area of thirteen thousand square miles, is said to be the largest cattle ranch in the world; and away to the north-west, over towards the Timor Sea, are two other great ranches—Wave Hill and Victoria Downs. In each of these places, and many others like them, life is highly civilised and comfortable, though in view of their remoteness one might never expect it. In all sorts of ways they play important parts in the development of the country. Wave Hill Station, for example, maintains a radio post that has been of enormous help in the work of the Flying Doctor Service.

Australia with its clear skies is a wonderful country for air travel, and Australians use planes almost as if they were buses. Everywhere, even in the remotest parts, the country is criss-crossed with air routes. The Flying Doctor Service is just another aspect of this air-mindedness. Working from bases in the different states, this service flies well over a million miles a year, taking medical help to the outback. On distant homes and camps are simple transmitting and receiving radio sets—called transceivers—by which the Flying Doctor can be summoned. In many a case of accident—perhaps of a man being crushed by a falling tree—or of dangerous illness, the speedy help of the Flying Doctor has saved the patient hours and perhaps days of suffering. Often enough it has saved life.

### *As Few People See It*

Very nearly in the exact centre of Australia, a thousand miles from Darwin in the north and the same from Adelaide in the south, is Alice Springs. At one time merely a rough outpost on the Overland Telegraph Line, Alice Springs is now a lively township with a population of over two thousand. It is well laid out, with wide straight streets and for the most part neat and attractive buildings. There are up-to-date shops, hotels, electricity, a cricket field, a racecourse, golf links and even a tennis court that can be flood-lit for play at night. After Darwin, Alice Springs is by far the most important centre in the whole of the Northern Territory.

When, years ago, I first visited that part of the world, a journey to "the Alice" was a journey indeed. First, there was a wearisome six hundred miles in a train that left Adelaide once a fortnight. That landed me at a place called Oodnadatta; then it was a matter of some hundreds of miles with camels; and all was a weariness of sand and heat and flies and sometimes grave danger from lack of water, or trouble with Aborigines. The same journey to-day takes a few hours by plane.

None the less, such is the remoteness of Alice Springs that the day is not yet when the features of life there are popularly known. Not so long ago I had a man ask me if the Alice Springs blacks were still "bad" —meaning untamed savages. Most of the Aborigines to-day are in the care of missions, notably the Hermannsburg Aboriginal Mission where there is even an art school. Some of the native pupils have shown such aptitude for painting in water colour the extraordinary forms of the Central Australian scene that their work sells well and has been exhibited in London.

In the remote Stuart Ranges of South Australia there is the opal field of Coober Pedy, an Aboriginal name meaning "Where white men live in holes in the ground." The description is exact. This is desert country where the shade temperature rises to more than a hundred-and-twenty degrees and there is not a speck of shelter for miles round, nor a tree nor even some bushes from which one could be built. The opal diggers live in tunnels they have dug in the barren hillsides. Some have wives and children; the little ones are taught by correspondence from distant Adelaide.

There are hundreds of pits where opal is or has been worked; so close together are they that you have to be careful not to stumble into one. The opal diggers of Coober Pedy seldom see visitors in their uncomfortable part of the world, but at least their opals are well known. Only recently here in London where I am writing this, a gem merchant

## *The Landscape*

in Hatton Garden showed me some opals from Coober Pedy. They were of a kind that has never been found outside Australia, alive in the intensity of their dark opalescence. The gem merchant told me there was a growing market for these lovely stones.

In Northern Queensland is the Cape York Peninsula. Roughly five hundred miles long, it is bounded on one side by the Gulf of Carpentaria and on the other by the Coral Sea and the Great Barrier Reef. Few except air travellers passing overhead to other districts, and ship passengers sailing along the Barrier Reef routes, have seen anything of it. All the air travellers see are endless miles of virgin scrub lands, with now and then a cattle station or a small gold- or tin-mining township. All that the sea travellers see are sandy beaches and rocky headlands, and the occasional smoke of blackfellows' camp and signal fires.

This was where I lived for eight years, making virgin country into a coconut plantation. The actual spot was the Peninsula's northernmost tip, just round the corner, so to speak, from the Coral Sea side. My only companions—when I had any at all—were some wandering Aborigines.

Across a mile or two of sea from my house was Possession Island, where, in 1770, Captain Cook, on behalf of King George III took possession of the eastern side of Australia under the name of New South Wales. Nearby were two other islands, one a mass of barren rock without any suggestion of beach, the other little more than an islet that was practically all beach, lagoon and pandanus palms, which the blacks named after me because it was immediately opposite my house.

Very occasionally I might glimpse the distant smoke of a steamer making her way through the coral lanes about the Cape—a China passenger liner perhaps, or a cargo tramp on the Sydney-Java run. But for weeks and months on end the sea on this Gulf of Carpentaria side was completely devoid of vessels. And when at last one did show up and appear to be coming my way, it would most likely prove to be only a lugger making for a pearling ground farther on.

With the Aborigines suddenly and frequently going off in their nomadic way and leaving me completely alone, this persistent emptiness of the sea gave an almost Crusoe-like quality to my solitude.

On these occasions, which sometimes lasted for months, I saw this part of Australia as few people indeed could ever see it. Not only was there the vast emptiness of the sea, but the emptiness of the plantation and immediate jungle and the bush interminably beyond it. Evidence of people all about me merely made my aloneness more marked.

I had a wide-verandaed bungalow that the blacks had helped me build.

## *As Few People See It*

But they were gone. In a corner were some axes and a crosscut saw that they had used in the work. The axes had broken handles, the saw was badly buckled, for, as people whose idea of a dwelling was a bark-and-bush shelter, they knew nothing of the use of tools. A screen that shaded the full length of the veranda from the fierceness of the tropical sun was made of jungle canes they had brought in. Decoratively on some of the wall-posts grew wild orchids they had found; they had taught me their Aboriginal names. Along the beach I could see their empty *mia-mias*, one or two with loose scraps of bark flapping in the trade-wind. . . .

It was not that I was sentimentally bemoaning the Aborigines' absence, but it was odd to feel that where there had been fifty or sixty people I was now the only one. It was as if some strange and sudden disaster had happened to the world. More than once I imagined I saw figures about the *mia-mias* and heard voices in the dark. There were nights when I started up, revolver in hand, because of the fancied creak of some floor-boards which, in building the house, I had purposely left loose as a possible warning should some of my savage companions come to steal or do me a mischief. From this I eventually went on consciously to inventing people, to filling my solitude with them as if they were really there, and writing a novel about them.

But meanwhile I found that, although there was absence of human life, there was plenty of other kinds of life to give me interest, and keep me sane. In the lack of human beings, my close attention was rewardingly drawn to these creatures, which, previously I had noted only superficially.

I even investigated the infinitely small in this life about me, for I had been a medical student with a leaning towards bacteriology and had a high-powered microscope with me. There in the human aloneness of my bungalow, with the wind hissing through the casuarina trees of the tide-mark and the sea lapping the beach, I peered through the lenses at whatever lay to hand; a drop of stale water, or a speck of blood from a gorged mosquito. My solitary life in this far part of Australia that few people see became full indeed. For this reason I called a book I wrote about my experiences there *My Crowded Solitude*.

Some twenty miles off Cape York is Thursday Island, so named because it was discovered on a Thursday. With the exception of Saturday, all the other days in the week have given their names to islands in the vicinity. A pearling centre, Thursday Island has a population as mixed as Darwin's, with white in the minority. The neighbourhood is notorious for the odd behaviour of the tides. As a pearler I used to call at the island



## *The Landscape*

for stores and to sell my mother-o'-pearl shell, and many a time my lugger was for hours prevented from entering the port because of an adverse tide that ran with the speed of a flooding river, while only a few hundred yards away an empty kerosene tin or piece of driftwood sailed merrily along another current in the required direction.

Thursday Island is the headquarters of a Church of England diocese which embraces, among other vast areas, the whole of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Its cathedral, the island's largest building, is named after a British-India liner, the *Quetta*, which struck a hidden underwater rock near Cape York and went straight down with the loss of a great many lives. Mementoes of the lost liner—brass portholes and other objects recovered by divers—hang on the cathedral's walls.

The island is one of several in Torres Strait, an eighty-miles wide strip of sea that separates Cape York from Papua. The native peoples on these islands are Melanesians of a remarkably virile and intelligent type. At one time much-feared cannibals, they are now a civilised race with their own churches, councillors and petty law courts. Some islands have their own *bêche-de-mer* or pearling boats, communally owned.

I have employed Torres Strait Islanders from time to time in my *bêche-de-mer* vessel; and never have I known better, or gayer, "swim"—that is, naked—divers. Often they looked upon the search for *bêche-de-mer* as a game. They tried seeing who could go the deepest or stay longest on the bottom. Sometimes a man would stay down so long that I was terrified something had happened to him—that a shark had got him perhaps, or he had blunderingly stepped into the jaw of a giant clamshell lying concealed but wide open on the bottom, and the tremendous shell had snapped shut on him and held him till he drowned. I suspected they sometimes stayed down like this out of an impish urge to tease and worry me.

There is none of this happy-go-lucky "swim" diving business about the big Thursday Island pearling fleets. "Swim" diving is a matter for the shallows, five or six fathoms at most. With their sea-going luggers, costly air-pumps and deep-sea diving dresses, their highly-skilled divers and tenders, pearling proper is a well-organised business; and the depths they work are sometimes as much as twenty-five fathoms.

At various places in the waters of the Great Barrier Reef you will see them, fourteen ton, two-masted vessels, drifting or slowly sailing with the diver down below. The divers work thus from moving craft, instead of anchored ones, because the pearl shells are often widely scattered

### *As Few People See It*

and gathering them calls for considerable freedom of movement. Contrary to popular belief it is pearl *shell*, the mother-o'-pearl of commerce that is sought, and not pearls. It is all to the good when pearls are found, but the pearler who depended on them for his living would soon go bankrupt. Not one shell in a thousand has a pearl of value.

The Great Barrier Reef, greatest coral formation in the world, lies along the north Queensland coast for twelve hundred miles, but at greatly varying distances from it—in some places as much as a hundred and fifty miles, in others only ten. The reef is not, as sometimes people imagine, a line of coral standing up from the bottom of the sea like a wall. There is not just one reef, but hundreds of thousands, many of them as wide as fields. Here and there are islands, some of outstanding loveliness, and it has been said of certain palm-fringed passages between these islands that no one can sail through them and not believe in God.

But the chief attraction is the coral. Its forms are infinite. Showing clearly through the glass-like water are corals shaped like antlers and delicate shrubs and ferns, and corals that look like the pictures we sometimes see of the human brain, with the cerebral sections clearly marked. There are miniature abbeys, tall glittering stalagmites, cups that might have been made on a potter's wheel, and things like encrusted human hands with the water giving an appearance of idle movement to the fingers. And everywhere is colour, from ultramarine and delicate shrimp-pink to the subtlest greens and glowing violets. Always one finds new wonders. There are hundreds of miles of such sights.

Just over the way from the Coral Sea and the Great Barrier Reef, is New Guinea—Australia's principal Pacific Islands Territory. Until World War II few people knew anything of this island. Settlements were few and small; the white population were simply some government officials, missionaries, traders, planters, prospectors and the like. I was a gold prospector there at that time, and more than once—a lone white with a half dozen fuzzy-haired natives to carry my picks, shovels, and other gear—I tramped the Owen Stanley ranges by a trail that the outside world had never heard of: the Kokoda trail. The war altered all that; in the part it played in defeating the Japanese invasion of Papua, the Kokoda trail made history. All over that great island there are jungle trails, twisting from village to village in the rain forests of mountains which rise to thirteen thousand feet. From the Mekeo district of Papua, on the southward side of the island, to the Sepik river on the other side, there are tremendous, jungle-clad valleys across which the natives can shout messages to villages on the other side.

## *The Landscape*

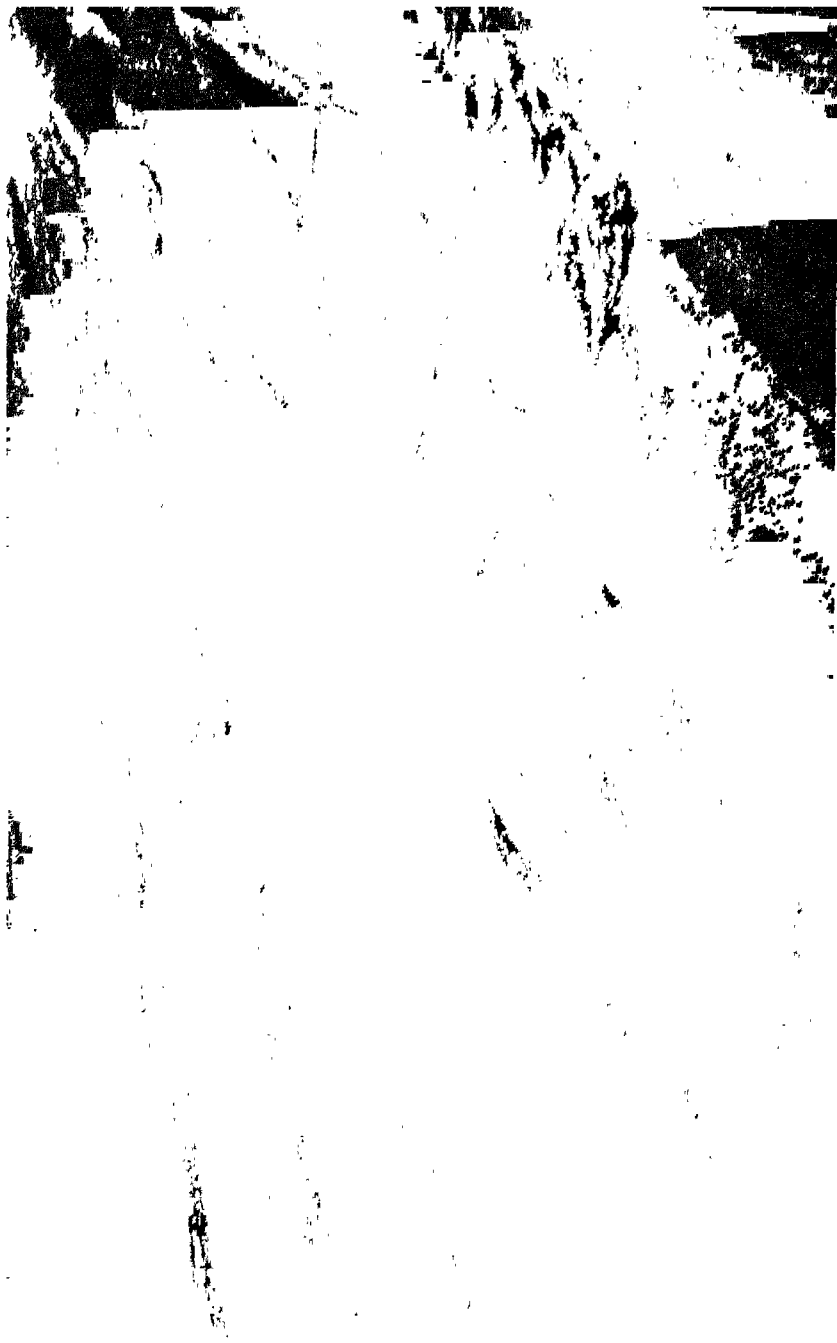
Natives in these regions are still to be seen with birds-of-paradise plumes in their hair. There are coastal villages, such as Hanuabada, near Port Moresby, whose houses of sago-palm thatch are built on stilts in the shallow water out from the shore, in the fashion of a South Seas Venice.

Belief in sorcery is common; death from what we would call natural causes is unknown to the untutored native mind and all adverse happenings, even to minor accidents, are believed to be the result of an enemy's magic. This naturally leads to blackmail and secret societies with power and influence over the simpler natives. One of these is the Duk-Duks, whose members wear extraordinary feathered masks and paraphernalia at their meetings in the recesses of the bush. There is a widespread belief in spirits. Trees, rivers, rocks, mountains, rain, lightning, thunder, drought, wind, all have their spirits or are controlled by spirits. These and many other features of New Guinea life are much the same to-day as they have always been.

But civilisation marches on. Take, for example, the gold-mining town of Wau in north-eastern New Guinea. Wau lies in the mountains only forty air miles from the coast, but travelling in those jungles and gorges is so difficult that when I first visited the territory the forty miles were a foot journey of two full weeks. To-day the same journey takes half an hour by plane; and where once there had been a camp of tents and rough huts there is this busy and up-to-date township of Wau with well-stocked shops, pleasant dwellings, electric light, a cinema, and schools. And all these things—together with cows, horses and heavy mining machinery—have been flown across mountain gorges and jungles. Wau is a town that has been wholly built by air, perhaps the only one in the world. But it is still a place that few people see.

Finally, seen by the fewest people of all, there is Australian Antarctica. This comprises about half of the huge Antarctic Continent and is no less than five-sixths the size of Australia herself. Only a dozen or so people at a time have experience of life in this far south realm—chiefly members of Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions studying weather origins and conditions and their effects on Australian agriculture, and gaining knowledge of mineral deposits known to exist there such as coal and plutonium.

It is a highly spectacular land, with in some places tremendous black cliffs edging the sea and in others noble headlands with high mountains stretching beyond to a white infinity. The South Pole itself is among ten-thousand foot mountains such as these. There are colonies of penguins,



PRIMITIVE COUNTRY : the time-u on Macdonnell Ranges of the Northern Territory



PRIMITIVE PEOPLE    *Aborigines still hunt with the weapons of their ancestors*

### *As Few People See It*

sea-elephants—huge creatures two or three tons in weight—and many varieties of sea birds such as gulls and petrels. But for the rest, this Australian Antarctic is a lifeless desolation of ice up to six thousand feet thick, and of winter darkness and terrible winds. At Heard Island, where a permanent weather outpost has been established, winds of a hundred and twenty miles an hour have been recorded . . . No wonder this is the land that fewest people see.



## THE LANDSCAPE III

---

*Heard Island is an outpost in the battle against nature which has gone on unceasingly since the arrival of the First Fleet. Governor Phillip's party was vainly sowing corn within a few weeks of landing, and ever since it has been a fight to make the land produce things that men need to survive.*

*Victory has never been easily won, for Australia is not a land of prodigal natural wealth. The Aborigines who grew nothing took the easy path. White settlers, who had to grow more than they wanted for themselves if their economy was to work, took a path which proved to be covered (quite literally) with thorns, prickly pear, and a host of other antagonistic pests. Even the English bunny rabbit became, in the new setting, a monster who threatened to destroy mankind.*

*Without the help of science, it is doubtful if white settlement could have continued. A fifteenth-or sixteenth-century attempt at colonisation would almost certainly have failed. The achievements of scientists, particularly in the primary industries where until very recently their work has naturally been concentrated, makes a heartening story. It is told by an author who has written effectively of man's fight against heavy odds in other spheres, in his books *The Great Escape*, *The Dam Busters* and *Escape Or Die*.*



# *As Man Has Made It*

PAUL BRICKHILL

ON A summer morning in 1944 clouds of gritty dust swirled from the sea over the New Zealand town of New Plymouth, seeping into houses and settling in a film. Overhead more dust drifted, thickening into a pall that was dimming the sun, so that by noon housewives were turning on the lights, and at three o'clock the street lamps came on to gleam dimly like misty islands in the gloom that was giving New Plymouth its first black-out in a new kind of war.

As there was a war on, the mystery frightened some people—where the dust came from lay no land, only sea for 1,200 miles across the Tasman sea to Australia.

But sailors saw dust storms at sea, and along Australia's south-eastern seaboard it was rolling steadily east. Over some towns the sun that was normally so blinding was a blue disc at which the eye could openly gaze.

It came from the mallee country of Victoria where farmers bitterly watched it swirl off the heart of their land and go with the wind, the barren fruits of erosion that people had talked idly about for years. They remembered the Oklahoma dust bowl and became acutely aware that the world lives off the tiniest skin of the earth, the top five inches of fertile soil. When that blows away the harsh stuff below will not grow food, and in Australia it was blowing away.

Now thousands of Australians are fighting erosion in a long campaign with no quick cure. Their weapons are sweat, patience and science—the men are agronomists, plant physiologists and geneticists, agricultural engineers, surveyors, crop specialists, meteorologists, soil scientists and animal husbandmen. Some are also farmers or graziers or civil servants because it is a national task, led by the various soil conservation commissions and the C.S.I.R.O. (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation). Each state has its Soil Conservation Board, and at lower level are dozens of other bodies, experimental stations and advisers.

They are fighting two kinds of erosion, "water" and "wind."

## *As Man Has Made It*

Rain carries off the topsoil through trickles into gullies into streams and rivers to the sea, and too many sheep and rabbits, too many crops and droughts strip the thinned soil of the roots that bind it together so that it crumbles at the mercy of the wind. Across great plains the topsoil which was the land's warm flesh has wasted so that the bones of rock and limestone lie bare, and wide acres that nourished wheat and animals lie abandoned with homesteads half-buried in wind-driven drifts.

Now, according to the new gospel that has spread so fast since the war, numberless fields are staked with surveyed pegs to guide the contour ploughing, and the furrows wind everywhere across the slopes, giving barriers to the rains instead of channels down which it can run. Men build check-banks, crush the sides of gullies and fill them with stones—anything to stop or slow the flow of water.

Danger areas are sown with hardy grasses, clovers, rye and cocksfoot whose roots bind the soil so that once again it can hold moisture which helps more growth which slows more water which deposits more silt which rebuilds the topsoil which yields more growth . . . a benevolent circle, but so slow.

Rows of trees that run for miles are being planted to act as wind-breaks.

Stock in bad areas are thinned out to give the grasses and clovers a chance, making amends for those who broke the first known law of agriculture, "The Law Of The Cloven Hoof," discovered ten thousand years ago when men found that sharp hooves pierced the crust for the sun and the wind to dry and crumble. They say the Sahara Desert was made like that, and the old antidote was, "No stock on your land every seventh year."

Other things, of course, break up the soil too, and there are other cures: the rotary hoe, for instance, which will plough into the ground half the stubble of an old crop and leave the other half thinned over the field with binding roots below and stalks above to filter the wind. Then there are the "sweeps," ploughshares shaped like boomerangs which slide under the soil and prepare the land for sowing without disturbing the top. Another one is the "cultipack" which packs dusty soil down.

None of it sounds dramatic, but the results are. At Cowra and Wagga, just after the war, scientists took over two farms of wasted land for experiments. Farmers shuddered to see those ugly sites of galloping erosion. Neither would grow a blade of anything and both were regarded as forever finished for agriculture.

They used all their tricks, spreading fertilisers, building check-banks,

## *The Landscape*

trapping water and grains of soil brought from uplands by rain and wind, sowing the right clovers to bind the dust, nursing the shoots, killing the rabbits—and slowly the waste revived and gave birth to fresher growth. To-day those acres are smiling farms with lush crops and pastures, and the men know that so long as soil keeps a spark of life, ten years' toil and sweat can nurse it back to health. That spark stays alive across wide plains.

You may not take the men for scientists, because few outside the cities wear white coats and thick glasses in a bubbling hush of test tubes and retorts. More likely they are wearing khaki shorts in the sun. Some have never been to university or done pure research, but they *are* scientists, researching and applying their lore in a huge, open-air laboratory, and this is mainly their story because the land is the purse of Australia's riches.

In the romantic days pioneers conquering a new land were bearded men with rifles on horseback fighting natives armed with spears. The modern pioneers are fighting rabbits, for instance, which is worthier and harder.

A hundred and sixty-five years ago Captain Phillip reached the virgin harbour of what was to be Sydney, with his eleven little ships and his few hundred men. Australian books tell of these hardy pioneers, but do not often mention that five rabbits also arrived on one of the ships. The five took to their new land more ardently than the humans, and bred like rabbits. By the time there were five thousand humans in the colony there were probably five hundred thousand rabbits spreading across the ranges and the plains far ahead of the explorers.

By Victorian times they were devouring crops and as the years passed people became aware that they held a worse menace. Eating out to the fringes of the stony deserts they stripped pastures and became allies of the sheep, the cattle, humans, rain, drought, and wind that caused erosion. For years men on the land fought them with traps, poisons, shot-guns and gas-guns (to fumigate the burrows). They dug up the warrens and fenced their farms with wire mesh but the rabbits bred faster than they could be killed, made new warrens and burrowed under the wire fences. Round a pasture plain in Western Australia men built a wire-mesh fence 1,139 miles long, rooted deep in the ground, but the rabbits went round the ends and began ravaging new land. The damage they were doing was running into hundreds of millions of pounds. Australians wryly regarded them as an Englishman regards the weather—a kind of inevitable and mournful joke that is not very funny.

By the 'thirties, Australia, with 7,000,000 people, had, as far as men

## *As Man Has Made It*

could judge between *five hundred and a thousand million* rabbits, and each rabbit was doing ten shillings worth of damage a year. At that rate the damage bill added up to between £250,000,000 and £500,000,000 a year. Seven rabbits ate as much as one sheep. If they could be wiped out the sheep population of 100,000,000 could be doubled, and sheep are Australia's wealth (a year's wool clip has brought in as much as £632,000,000).

If they could be wiped out? Every known method could kill only 25,000,000 a year, and it seemed that nothing could stop them progressively eating the country into spreading erosion, infertility and poverty. Men even spoke bitterly of the day they would have to abandon the continent to the timid rabbit.

A young Brazilian researcher wrote about a powerful virus disease called myxomatosis which was killing pet rabbits in U.S.A. It was highly contagious in the hutches and seemed incurable—but it killed only rabbits.

Hoping they might be able to start an epidemic among Australian rabbits, wild life scientists brought some of the virus from America and after a lot of tests injected some into rabbits on an island off Victoria and into other rabbits in one of two man-made warrens isolated behind wire netting in Melbourne (in case it attacked other wild life). It did not work; one or two rabbits died, but it did not spread from warren to warren, and the experiments petered out rather dismally. As a matter of routine they corked a sample of the virus in test tubes, filed it away somewhere, and were back where they had started.

The war came and after the war the rabbits were worse then ever, especially with the new worry about erosion. It was a woman who was responsible for what happened then—Dame Jean McNamara, a Melbourne virus specialist. She thought myxomatosis should be given another chance and campaigned a long time for that, writing to newspapers, talking to the C.S.I.R.O. and generally pressing the matter with a woman's tenacity. Finally, in 1949, she won. The wild life scientists, as much in desperation as anything, decided to try again, dug out the old test-tubes of virus, and after months of more tests they released infected rabbits in five areas of southern New South Wales and Victoria.

For a couple of weeks hope flickered. Quite a few dead rabbits were seen here and there but after three more weeks the number of corpses was clearly dwindling. Obviously there was no epidemic. Winter came on and now weeks passed between the sightings of a dead rabbit. Hope was dead again.

## *The Landscape*

In November that year heavy rains fell and then the sun beat down, bringing the first heat of summer.

Early in December farmers around the New South Wales Alpine foothills began reporting lots of dead rabbits lying about their paddocks. The scientists investigated and were startled to find they had died of myxomatosis. At that moment rabbits began dying in scores and hundreds two hundred miles away at Corowa. Myxomatosis again! Then 400 miles from Corowa it flared up in another spot.

Suddenly the disease spread like a bush fire over an area half as big as Europe. In a rough circle, nearly a thousand miles across, the eyes of rabbits were clogged with mucous, their heads swelled, and their corpses littered the land in tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and then millions. All dead from myxomatosis. It was joyfully dramatic—and mystifying, until the scientists, thinking of the rainwater and the heat and the focus spots of infection, found that one of Australia's nuisances had been doing the good work. They located the virus in the bellies of mosquitoes and discovered in tests that the mosquitoes sucked the virus in with the blood of infected rabbits and then transferred it to any healthy rabbits they bit. So it was self-spreading!

The next step was easy: they loosed infected rabbits in other parts of the country and by February, 1951, the disease was slaughtering rabbits over a million square miles, over nearly all of Victoria, large areas of New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland, and parts of Western Australia. The mosquitoes even carried it over the sea from the mainland to islands off Victoria, and even (by plane) to Tasmania.

One day a jubilant farmer wrote to the C.S.I.R.O. and said, "Myxomatosis has swept my holding clear of rabbits from fence to fence."

People became frightened that it would spread to humans, so three keen scientists volunteered to act as "guinea pigs" and were jabbed with needles of the virus. Others watched them with morbid anxiety for a month but the three stayed as fit as ever.

By May, 1951, with the southern winter coming on, the disease was dying out, which made it clearer than ever that mosquitoes were the good agents. With no mosquitoes about the rabbits were breeding again that winter, and scientists were getting ready to loose more infected mosquitoes the following summer.

There was no need to. Somehow, somewhere, the virus "smouldered" and the epidemic broke out again among the rabbits in spring when the first mosquito buzzed.

By Christmas that year reports were coming in of 90 to 100 per cent

## *As Man Has Made It*

rabbit clearances across sheep stations as big as English counties, and dying and eroding pastures slowly began reviving. Soon hundreds of farmers could see the difference in their crops.

They say that myxomatosis killed 300,000,000 rabbits in two years.

In 1950, around Cunnamulla in Western Queensland, lay a thousand square miles of sandy country eaten bare by rabbits. It had been useless for fifty years, but now the whole plain is already covered with new grass, saltbush and other herbage, ideal for stock raising. Sunday Island, off Victoria, once could just carry 125 sheep. Now 500 breeding ewes are thriving there.

The epidemic is still spreading and even the scientists who started it could not stop it. Some have been thinking that myxomatosis will never free the whole country from rabbits because mosquitoes, which breed in water, can never carry it to the dry central areas. Lately, though, the disease has been killing rabbits farther from water than mosquitoes can fly and there is a theory that lice and mites on the rabbits themselves may be carrying the virus. Whatever the outcome, it is already history's most spectacular scientific attack on a pest. To Australia and to the world that invisible virus is bringing more riches than all the inedible gold men dig up and bury again in their massive vaults.

But killing rabbits and stopping and repairing erosion are only two ways in which open-air science is making Australia more fruitful.

The world has an idea that Australia is a "dead heart," surrounded by a beard-like fringe of coastal growth where rain falls. That is a little right and a lot wrong. Australia is about as big as the U.S.A., nearly 3,000,000 square miles, and about a third of that is "dead heart"—arid wastes of sand, eroded escarpment, boulder and stone, and here and there a little parched growth waiting long and hardily for the next benediction of annual rain. Another forty per cent or so (largely undeveloped) has rainfall of from ten to fifteen inches a year, and can carry varying numbers of sheep and cattle.

The rest, nearly a third, about 725,000 square miles (as big as eight United Kingdoms, and nearly as big as Europe) is good or potentially good for agriculture and intensive stock raising.

In the next score of years irrigation will bring lush growth to many million more acres. Up in the snow country they are carving eighty-five miles of tunnels under the Australian Alps to divert several rivers in a scheme bigger than America's famous T.V.A. There will be seven great dams, 500 miles of racelines and canals, sixteen power stations and four

## *The Landscape*

times as much water over a vast area. But irrigation is limited by the supply of water and Australia has few rivers and no giant ones.

There is a bright spot. Under its earth lies the biggest basin of artesian water in the world, a pool that stretches across a third of the continent and can be tapped to the surface. The water is good for sheep and cattle, but too mineralised for agriculture. So Australia's solution to more production lies in making more of the good land and the "marginal" land.

Concerning this marginal land .

For a hundred years a mysterious sheep disease has puzzled people in many countries. On certain lush pastures where rain fell reliably, sheep always sickened and became listless and weak with dulled and running eyes. Their fleece lost its bloom and crimp and the sheep lost weight and died, anaemic and emaciated.

In Australia it always happened in apparently healthy country on the coasts of Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and on King Island off Tasmania. They called it "coast disease" or "wasting disease" and in some parts, too, crops withered and died and plains that looked so green were left to the rabbits, which annoyingly thrived there. It was one of nature's mysteries.

Graziers had never thought much about the mineral requirements of animals and would have laughed at the idea that their sheep should eat some metals to be healthy, but twenty years ago Australian scientists, increasingly aggravated by the loss of these good acres, thought the trouble might be nutritional—not a matter of accepted nourishment which was obviously in these areas, but something more subtle.

Odd little snippets of world research news were mentioning that traces of metal salts were beneficial to living tissues, and the open-air scientists thought that lack of such salts might be the explanation. They put a sheep on the green bad lands, and when it sickened with wasting disease dosed it with a shot-gun mixture of the soluble salts of nickel, cobalt, manganese, zinc, iron, and copper—an unappetising diet even for a sheep.

With startling suddenness it began to get well and then to thrive. Over the next two months they dosed it with various combinations of the metals till they isolated cobalt as the essential one.

But that was not the end; science is seldom so simple and spectacular.

It took another year of work to show that one two-thousandth of an ounce of cobalt a day was enough to stop the symptoms of coast disease, and that a sheep could get this amount if they dressed the pastures with

## *As Man Has Made It*

cobalt sulphates or scattered in the paddocks lumps containing cobalt which the sheep could lick.

Graziers began trekking back to the area with their sheep—and then came another setback. Their sheep still got a mild form of wasting disease which damaged their wool. In more tests the researchers found that the sheep also needed more copper than the pastures provided, so they sowed the paddocks with copper sulphate and wasting disease vanished.

But the sheep are only part of the story. There is, or was, a great plain in South Australia nearly as big as Holland and known as the "Ninety Mile Desert." The name seemed hardly fair because so much of it seemed to be rolling pasture in a mild and sunny climate. The rains were good (15 to 22 inches a year), permanent water lay underground, and most of the ten thousand square miles was easy to clear and plough.

Years ago sheep men had led their flocks on to it but the sheep had sickened with wasting disease, and the graziers had left. Then came the farmers who sowed wheat and oats but their crops, unaccountably, grew sparse and spindly. They tried fertilising with superphosphates but the crops still withered and died, and the farmers left. The grassland roughened into a wilderness of stunted mallee scrub, banksia, honeysuckle, bottle-brush, desert oak, dwarf stringy bark, broom and yacca, picturesque but inhospitable so that they called it a desert: an odd sort of a desert because nature made it bloom with wild flowers and a few lonely men lived among them, keeping bees and harvesting honey.

After beating wasting disease the scientists wondered whether crops had failed in the Ninety Mile Desert because they, too, could not get enough metal in their diet there. Certainly the ground lacked more than phosphates.

In 1944 men of the C.S.I.R.O. and the Waite Agricultural Institute began experimenting on a thousand plots of soil and found that lack of nitrogen in the soil was stunting growth. They knew they could correct that by sowing lucerne and clover which put nitrogen into the soil, but when they tried lucerne and clover it withered. It was then that they dressed the clover patches with zinc sulphate, and the clover flourished. On this zinc-strewn earth that had been nitrogenised by the clover they tried wheat and oats, and instantly the yield doubled.

Yet still something was missing; the clover was not renewing itself because it was failing to produce good seeds. They tried more minerals,



## *The Landscape*

and on a patch where they had scattered copper sulphate the clover flourished anew.

So they found both the missing elements, and it is amazing how little of them is required to make the wilderness bloom with real crops (though they must also keep adding superphosphates). Five shillings' worth of zinc and copper sulphates will make an acre of this "desert" abundant for at least four years. That is why they call them "trace elements."

The face of the Ninety Mile Desert is changing fast. Farmers are steadily spreading wider over it, and the crops springing up. Graziers are coming back with their sheep and the cobalt licks. Month by month the pastures and the wheat and the oats are thickening and already 2,000 square miles are producing food. A farmer, for instance, estimates that a few shillings' worth of copper and zinc on one part of his holding is worth an extra £700 a year. When he has treated the whole of his ground it will double his sheep carrying capacity. Dairy men are getting established with clover paddocks, and in the drier areas the scientists have planted veldt grass from South Africa which is thriving in sandy soil spread with zinc and copper solution.

In 1950 they rubbed out the name Ninety Mile Desert and officially renamed it Coonalpyn Downs.

Trace element treatment is opening up new land on Kangaroo Island, off South Australia, and in the grey soil of the Wimmera district in Victoria, and it will spread to more areas in Australia and beyond.

Oddly enough, plants in some areas kill sheep because they contain *too much* copper. For a long time that was a mystery. In parts of Victoria and New South Wales sheep often turned yellowish. They might be quite all right one evening and in the morning scores would be lying dead in the paddocks. Men called it "heliotrope disease" because it came on suddenly after sheep had been grazing some time on a white-flowered weed with heavy leaves known as "heliotrope." Researchers slit the bellies of dead sheep, found the liver and entrails bright orange, and narrowed the case to chronic copper poisoning. With the clues of their work on trace elements they found that heliotrope weed was absorbing the high copper content of the local soil. Now graziers are eradicating the weed and meanwhile keeping their flocks off the poisonous pastures.

Another weed, however, has become a new boon to mankind. At least it was despised as a weed for hundreds of years by Mediterranean peoples who first knew it, a nondescript little thing like a three-leaf

### *As Man Has Made It*

clover with white or pale pink flowers and long stalks lying close to the ground. No one knows how it got to Australia but one could guess, as it also grows round the southern English ports where windjammers used to spread sails for the colony.

A Victorian farmer named Howard first found it was good stock food back in 1890, and sang its praises for years to deaf ears. Thirty years later Australian scientists also found that it increased fertility remarkably by adding nitrogen to soil and since then it has become the best known clover in the country, in some areas doubling and trebling sheep and dairy production and in others enabling farmers for the first time to grow winter cereals in rotation. They call it subterranean clover because the flowers turn face down and send out fibres to plant its seeds firmly underground.

Last century a genius in cross-breeding plants, named William Farrer, produced new strains of Australian wheat resistant to rust and drought. His successors are working on dozens of other plants from all over the world—rice, jute, tobacco, opium poppy (for morphine), soy-bean, kikuyu grass—the list runs into hundreds. In animals it is the same story: tick-resisting zebu from India for the infested north, for instance. New sheep and cattle are bred to master hard environments and timeless war is waged on the pests and plants that worry them.

Rabbits are not the only imported pest to threaten Australia. There was a cactus plant called the prickly pear which nearly choked the country. Once a lonely flea kept biting a king in his bed and the king could not catch it and could not sleep so that he nearly went mad and lost his crown. Like the flea, the humble prickly pear seemed an absurdly minor detail to shake a kingdom.

*It was no native; an old four-master brought a couple of specimens from America seventy years ago and they were planted in Queensland as a botanical curiosity. People got seeds and planted more of them, admiring the tall pulpy novelty that seemed so fond of its new country. The winds and the birds carried more seeds and prickly pear began to appear far afield. It was quite a few years before people realised that it was being rather a nuisance on farmland, but then it was too late to stop. The great thickets ran down the Queensland coast into New South Wales and the more they spread the faster they spread. First, as usual, only those men worried whose farms were strangled, but by 1910 it was well out of control and became a national crisis. Men called it "The Green Octopus."*

In 1914 Queensland sent a band of entomologists round the world

## *The Landscape*

seeking some way of beating it, and in South America they came across a little insect called cactoblastis. Later in life it grew into a moth but in its young days, as a grub, it ate cactus ravenously and would touch nothing else. It seemed like finding the Philosopher's Stone and the entomologists hopefully sailed home with some of the larvae, but on the way the larvae died. They tried again and again, vainly, while the prickly pear spread 400 miles inland across some of the best plains of a nation aware of the limit to its fertile acres. What had seemed such a quaint botanical pet was now a national cancer.

Farmers tried to dig it out, to burn it and crush it, hacking tracks through the carpet of thicket that grew twelve feet high, but it kept spreading and driving more thousands off their land. By 1925 it was choking a fertile area larger than England, Scotland, and Wales. The future looked grim.

In that year entomologists went again to Uruguay and succeeded in bringing fertile cactoblastis eggs back to Queensland. For months they worked hatching and breeding them in "cages" until they had just over 100,000 sticks of eggs, tiny things like white pin-heads, each stick averaging seventy to a hundred eggs. Then they started the tedious job of deploying this vast new army of insect eggs. To make sure the larvae penetrated the prickly pear, each stick of eggs had to be lightly gummed to a little square of paper which then had to be pinned by a cactus spike to the plant. Gangs of volunteers travelled the countryside doing that, and soon the army was hatching.

As the little white grubs came out of the eggs they ate through the pulpy "leaves," the boles and even the roots of the prickly pear and the towering plants began literally collapsing and vanishing into the stomachs of the minute and multiplying enemy.

The tide of prickly pear receded, but the campaign never relaxed. Entomologists kept breeding more battalions of cactoblastis and by 1931 the astounding figure of 2,750,000,000 sticks of eggs had been separately gummed on paper and jabbed by hand on to the green octopus.

By 1935 prickly pear was only a memory or a rare botanical gardens curiosity again (which had to be defended from the ravenous grubs) and the ghost farms which had been useless blossomed anew with pastures and crops. Land that had been worthless ten years before was now valued at £100,000,000 and the affair became the classic example of biological control of a plant pest by its natural enemy. In Queensland, near the spot where the first cactoblastis was planted, a grateful people have built a memorial hall to the little white grub.

## *As Man Has Made It*

Stories like these tell only a fraction of what the open-air scientists are doing from the tropics to the Antarctic, in snow, desert, plain, jungle, forest and sea.

You might see a geologist in the "dead heart" riding a camel, or a marine biologist in a sou'-wester and oilskins on the deck of a trawler. Up in the Northern Territory in 1952 seventy mineralogists, geologists, mining chemists and physicists were setting up tents at a God-forsaken spot called "Rum Jungle" where a prospector had found one of the world's richest uranium deposits. Not far away more geologists were bouncing over rough ground in a truck, trailing an aeroplane that was seeking more uranium with a scintillometer.

Mycologists are riding horses into the bush with axes to test trees for decay. Chemists stand in cattle dust at the "tick barrier" in northern New South Wales testing arsenic concentrations in the baths through which stockmen drive cattle to kill the ticks on them. Down on Heard Island, far to the south, meteorologists live in perennial snow and travel by dog sledge.

Far in the "backblocks" an entomologist tips blowflies from a wire trap into a bottle to take back to his laboratory (the blowfly was second only to drought as an enemy of sheep). Long ago they bred thick folds of skin into merinos to increase wool yield by giving it more area to grow on. But blowflies lay their eggs in the deep folds, the maggots hatch and burrow into the skin, making sores, and the sheep lose wool, sicken and die. Now research is attacking the flies and geneticists are breeding sheep with fewer skin folds to give the blowfly less chance (finding at the same time that it does not reduce the wool yield).

New synthetic fabrics are competing with wool and, as a corollary, scientists are seeking ways to make wool cheaper and better, to have it crease-proof, shrink-proof and shine-proof, give it a glossy or dull surface at will and dye it more attractively and cheaply. They even have a colony of wool-eating moths to help them make it moth-proof. Others are testing wool in carpets and finding how to make a sheepskin look like an expensive fur.

In wartime New Guinea you might have seen a pathologist of the malaria battle trekking through jungle and swamp with fuzzy-wuzzy native carriers.

Australian soldiers fighting there were going down with malaria like ninpins. Swarming malaria-carrying anopheles mosquitoes were causing more casualties than the Japanese and after Java fell there was little quinine for the soldiers. Then the new drug atebirin came from

## *The Landscape*

overseas, and with that and other weapons like D.D.T. the doctors and entomologists fought back in their own little war within a war.

By day soldiers covered themselves in the steamy heat with protective clothes. By night they sweated under mosquito nets, and sentries in the jungle wore gloves and cotton-mesh hoods. Soldiers sprayed their camps with pyrethrum and D.D.T., and aeroplanes sprayed and dropped "bombs" of the stuff on swamps where the mosquitoes bred and the jungle where they lived. They drained swamps too and sprayed them with oil. In Cairns, doctors studied the effects of drugs on the malaria parasites in the stomachs of mosquitoes and worked on human "guinea-pigs," finding the exact suppressive doses needed. It was the Cairns Medical Research Unit, under Brigadier Fairley, which showed the world how to use atebrin, and Fairley's name will survive the disease he fought so well.

They brought the ratc down to the point where, in some of the world's worst malaria country, only three men in a thousand would fall victims to it in a fortnight. In the sprayed parts of New Guinea the mosquito population fell by 95 per cent. It was a triumph of applied science and it seems almost a miracle that they were able to keep malaria away from the mainland of Australia. As the war was finishing, a new and better drug, paludrine, arrived and Australia is now safe from the disease.

An intriguing backwater on the health front is the "milking" of snakes for snakebite antidote.

Of Australia's many venomous snakes, the worst are the death adders, tiger snakes, copperheads and taipans. The long-fanged taipan which grows eleven feet long, and nearly as thick as a man's arm, is ranked with the cobra of India and the black mamba of South Africa as the world's deadliest. In Aboriginal mythology it is one of the great enemies; it attacks without provocation, snapping time and again, and only two men are known to have survived a taipan bite. The new serum saved them.

Scattered over the country are professional snake catchers who wear solid boots and long thick socks or leggings. For speed and dexterity most work with bare hands (it pays to be quick and sure). Some use forked sticks to pin a snake down but most have become a little *blasé* and their favourite method is to chase a snake, catch it by the tail, sweep it clear of the ground, grab it behind the head and hold it at arm's length.

It takes three men to "milk" a taipan safely. No. 1 holds the tail wrapped round his waist. No. 2 holds the squirming middle with one

## *As Man Has Made It*

hand and with his other grips it with grim tightness behind the head. No. 3 (gloved) uses both hands to tease it with a beaker covered at the top with rubber. In a moment the taipan is striking at the beaker, sinking his fangs through the rubber and squirting drops of venom into the beaker. Often they savage the beakers, trying to smash the glass and tear the rubber. Not long ago seventy-seven tiger snakes were "milked" into one beaker, filling it with two inches of the most concentrated snake venom in the world.

In the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories the venom is dried chemically into crystals which are injected in solution into horses, mild doses first and then stronger ones over the months until the horses are immune. Then they are bled and anti-snake bite serum made from the blood.

In India 20,000 people die from snakebite every year but there are few deaths in Australia. George Cann, for instance, curator of reptiles at Sydney's Zoo, was unconscious for four days and paralysed for a fortnight after being bitten by one of his tiger snakes. He would have died but for the serum which has also helped him recover from several death adder bites. Now it is a far cry to the bad old days when tough and grizzled bushmen who were bitten used to pack gunpowder on the bite, put a match to it and blow away the poisoned part.

Serum is ready even for pearl divers on the luggers of the north-west where tropical seas are home to a lot of poisonous sea-snakes of spectacular colours—blue, green, orange, red, and striped. The snakebite work is a minor sideshow of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne, whose leader, Sir MacFarlane Burnet, is honoured by the world's doctors for his virus research.

A lone chapter can only flirt round the fringes of applied science in Australia. Industry is another story. Take Broken Hill, for instance. Eighty years ago this escarpment stood gaunt and lonely in scorched desert 700 miles west of Sydney, and then stockmen driving the cattle south along the water-courses and grog-shanties started a gold rush by stories of white quartz in these Barrier Ranges. Men found little gold there but they did find the richest silver-lead-zinc ores in the world.

Seven stockmen formed a syndicate to mine it and one of them, a brawny Scot called McCulloch, played a euchre game against a "new chum" Englishman for half his seventh share. McCulloch lost, and his euchre game that night became the most expensive in card-playing history. Six years later that fourteenth share was worth £1,250,000.

By 1890 a prosperous, brawling, boom town had mushroomed on the desert and the men tearing the ore out of the broken hill drank water

## *The Landscape*

trucked by rail from Adelaide, and champagne. In droughts water was the more precious and at times they played skittles with unopened champagne bottles.

For years a lot of the metal wealth of the ores was lost. They could not separate it from the waste after the then known processes had extracted all the mineral they could. Millions of pounds were left buried in the great discarded hills of "tailings" that mounted by the mines until, in 1903, a metallurgist named Delprat told his men to boil the tailings in a solution of waste salt cake. The lost zinc floated to the surface in bubbles and stayed on top in froth which was easily skimmed off. It became known as the flotation process and is used all over the world.

That and other discoveries helped make Broken Hill what it is to-day, a garden city in the desert and, man for man, the nation's richest city, whose men in the mines are labour's aristocracy—no man getting less than £27 a week. They have not had a strike there for thirty years.

Broken Hill Pty. was the first big company to bite into the hills and it has led them directly over the years to making at Newcastle and Kembla the cheapest steel in the world, to a mountain of iron in South Australia, to ship-building at Whyalla, to the world's biggest lead-zinc smelting works at Port Pirie, to the manufacture of wire, tubings, forgings, casting, alloys and a hundred other products that are precious sinews to a young nation.

Now Australia's practical scientists are busily involved in plans to spend nearly £300,000,000 in new industries . . . petrol refining, chemicals, cement, fertilisers, engineering, textiles, metal industries, food, paper . . .

Years ago the world experts said they could never make paper from Australian woods because they were hardwoods and the fibres were too short. The local research men refused to believe it, and eventually found that it was not the length of fibre that mattered but the relation of the length to the thickness. Already paper mills using mostly local wood are producing every year £14,000,000 worth of paperboard, writing paper and good newsprint. They aim to double that, and, going further, also make stockings from the ubiquitous gum trees.

Men are planning to use atomic energy in Australian industry within the next decade. Prominent among the research workers is Professor Marcus Oliphant who was one of the top nuclear physicists working on The Bomb in U.S.A. during the war. He went home afterwards to lead atomic research at the National University in Canberra. More recently, the Federal Government appointed a three-man Atomic

## *As Man Has Made It*

Energy Commission to control all activities associated with uranium and atomic energy, and one of the Commission's members, Professor J. P. Baxter, said he thought atomic power could be made available to industry in from five to ten years. Oliphant has a vision that some day it might be used for distilling sea and bore water to irrigate Australia.

Even the "dead heart" has its modern uses. A new town of scientists and technicians called Woomera has sprung up on the sand and gibbers 300 miles from Adelaide. "Woomera" is an Aboriginal word for a wooden stick that helps a warrior launch his spears, and the new town is the starting point of the world's longest rocket range which runs 1,100 miles across deserted wasteland to the north-west coast not far from the Monte Bello islands (where Britain's first atom bomb was exploded), and can continue past that for another 2,000 miles into the Indian Ocean.

Woomera seldom sees rain and the thermometer goes up to 130 degrees, but it gives the scientists 350 days a year for open-air research on rockets, guided missiles and other weird and secret things, an odd contrast of the oldest and the newest—on the fringes of the area hunt the naked, "stone-age" Myall blacks.

(From a wild shrub the blacks used to get a narcotic substance they called "pituri" which they sucked and chewed and put on their spears to stupefy fish. In the wartime drug shortage C.S.I.R.O. men showed it could be used to make the "twilight sleep" drug—which Crippen used to poison his wife. Later chemists made from it a seasick pill which was swallowed by soldiers crossing the Channel on D-Day.)

But the laurels go mainly to the sunburnt researchers who are making the wide miles produce more food for a hungry world. Ten years ago you might say that a twelfth of the continent was developed enough to produce food for 22,000,000 people. Now a fertile tenth feeds, 30,000,000. As new land is made fertile and old land more fertile, the figures keep growing. They say that in a few decades Australia will feed 50,000,000. That is only a short-term view. Men who look a hundred years hence are quoting 100,000,000; and the scientists, who have already worked so many wonders, may easily achieve something more wonderful than that.





## THE LANDSCAPE IV

---

*Science has stimulated that optimism which has always uplifted the Australian's attitude to his own physical environment. It is a fortunate compensation. Without it, settlers would many times have lacked the will to carry on a struggle against natural elements which are not so much hostile as unco-operative. It is remarkable that the native vegetation includes very few edible plants; while the animals, although they are not man-eaters, are not in their turn very appetising for man to eat. Kangaroo tails and witchetty grubs are not a fully balanced diet for European stomachs.*

*Almost defiantly, the Australian has learned to love this natural scene which on the surface is so unlovable. Occasionally he may criticise it himself, but he will not allow any criticism from an outsider. It is one of the thinnest parts of the national skin. Mary Elwyn Patchett is typically defensive and defiant. Her tales of her own childhood in the Australian bush have proved enormously attractive to British radio listeners, and have been reprinted in two volumes—*Ajax the Warrior* and *Tam, the Untamed*.*

# *As Nature Left It*

MARY ELWYN PATCHETT

**O**N A cattle station, in the border country between New South Wales and Queensland, I was born and spent my childhood. There my young mind developed, knowing nothing of the man-fashioned riches of other continents but absorbing the harsh beauties of my homeland, taking for granted its adaptable vegetation, its unique and gentle mammals. These were my world, and through it I moved with humility and love for the living, growing things about me. Incidents from those early days, when my bizarre country let me discover her secrets one by one, are sharp in my memory.

I remember a winter's morning in my ninth year when something I had noticed on the river bank the evening before sent me searching for my own kind of treasure. My joy could not have been greater had I known then, as I know now, that I was about to find for myself a living wonder of the world.

The day begins early on a cattle station, where the dogs rise with the sun and expect everyone else to do the same. I sprang out of bed and shivered in the crisp air while pale arrows of sunlight struggled through the trees to fall coldly on my veranda room. I hurried into my clothes and, with my dogs at my heels, a small spade over my shoulder, set off.

The river's edge was closely planted with weeping willows, a green wall in summer but leafless then. Behind them towered magnificent gums, their twisted roots growing towards the water and holding the soil against the impact of floods. From the bank, where the bark of the trees was dotted with the brittle, deserted outer shells of locusts, the ground stretched away covered in the short, harsh grass of winter. Little javelins of frost pierced through my open sandals. Overhead the pale, early-morning sky deepened slowly to the maturity of its splendid blue.

When spring came, the river flats would be lushly carpeted, and the sweet, green smell of trefoil rise beneath the crushing weight of horses' hooves. Gradually the fierce summer sunlight would turn the fertile

## *As Nature Left It*

earth to a bare and arid brownness, broken by wispy bunches of straw-like grass. But that day the soil had the cold hardness of winter.

About a mile from the homestead, it was time to walk warily and to keep the dogs in check until, with a cry of joy, I saw a small circle of grass where the frost lay more lightly than elsewhere, in between the knotty roots of a big gum growing on the bank.

The dogs sat unwillingly while I dug with care, until I used gentle hands to lift out the last of the earth, and there at the bottom of the hole were two small, grub-like creatures of a rather dirty white—baby platypuses. Beneath the eyes of a nine-year-old girl lay two living links with the past going back beyond man's counting. Because I was a child, I longed to touch them, but knew I dare not or their mother might desert them. They lay on packed earth and from their nest a subterranean passage led to the river, dividing to make one opening above and one below the water. Reluctantly I put twigs across the hole and built the top up again with leaves and earth—then I raced the dogs home to a breakfast of chops, home-made tomato sauce and eggs. That, too, might count with some people in the old world as a wonder hard to credit.

"Old" world . . . what an odd adjective to use, for it was I, not the people of Europe, who lived in an old world. Australia is the oldest continent of all, a rag-bag of the ages, a harsh yet lavish land filled with the "scribblings of nature learning to write." It is truly "the land of living fossils," a land so old, so different from the rest of the world that its scenes must never be judged by the same standards.

You must not look at our odd, shy animals with eyes that can see only those of other, newer countries; nor must you judge the macabre beauty of our vegetation by the standards of an orderly, cultivated garden. Just to exist, our vegetation must learn the wisdom of its own land, for nature denies the easy way of soft rain and rich earth. The surface has been worn flat by the winds and sands of time, so that there are few mountains to bring rain, and the soil is the last, hard scrapings of a tired continent. In our bush you will find no sweet and secret fairy dell; you will find instead fern-chilled chasms; not velvet greensward, but the grey-green of drought resistant grass.

And yet, set against the primal harshness of the land we love, we have inherited the gentlest furred animals ever known. We have almost a monopoly of marsupials, and marsupials really don't belong to the twentieth century at all. They appear to have developed from the small adventives—migrants which travel on floating debris—the mammals

## *The Landscape*

that reached Australia millions of years ago via the broken land-bridge that connected the continent with New Guinea and Malaya, and then developed according to their needs and the scant licence their new homeland allowed them.

Rabbits come from conjurors' hats to surprise us, but from Australia's dilly-bag—the Aborigines' version of the Gladstone—came the platypus and echidna to astound science. With these Australia supplied the link between reptile and mammal, completely disrupting the Linnean classification of species; and the order of the monotremes was eventually added to existing classifications to give the platypus and echidna a niche of their own.

The discovery of the eighteen-inch long oddity that is Platypus really shook the world. The story began on the Hawkesbury River in New South Wales, in the year 1797, when a man with a forgotten name first caught the small, pouched creature which he called "Water-mole" and which was later renamed.

Eventually a skin was sent to England and learned men were terribly annoyed about the whole thing, regarding the little stranger's sensitive, rubbery bill, its webbed feet, furred body and built-in shopping bag (which is too small to be a nursery) as a nuisance or a practical joke in rather bad taste. It simply could not be classified; how it bred and fed its young remained a mystery for years. The suspicious regarded the whole thing as a fake, and spoke of the platypus in a lordly way as a "Chinese mermaid." The Chinese had been known to sell unwary naturalists wonders of nature that turned out to be the top half of a monkey sewn to the tail of a fish; so the platypus was regarded for a while as a sort of beaver-duck *mésalliance* of Chinese origin.

Platypus babies hatch from eggs not an inch long, and feed on milk oozing from the mother's chest through large pores, on the pepper-pot principle. Harry Burrell, the great authority, developed them in what he called a "platypussary" and found that the incubation period is fourteen days. The spur on the hind flippers of the male, which secretes a mild poison strong enough to kill a rabbit and be painful to man, is a mystery. Some think it is a defensive weapon, others that it is used to quieten the female during mating. No one knows.

Platypus, with his lukewarm blood, is really the first Australian, the link between the world of gigantic dinosaurs—creatures so long that they had to have a booster brain in the seat of their pants to wag their tails—and the world of furry mammals. His nearest relative is Echidna, a sort of porcupine with a built-in perambulator. The female brings up

## *As Nature Left It*

her thirteen or so babies in her pouch until their spines become too ticklish, and then she ousts them.

Another link in the marsupial chain is Wombat: a smallish, yellow-brown, bear-like creature that lives in a burrow by day, and comes out at night to eat roots and grasses. He is elusive and rather rare.

Best known of the marsupials, by virtue of his place of honour in the national coat-of-arms, is Kangaroo. It was Captain Cook who first described him, but he saw him only as he moved behind the top of a hill which hid his characteristic legs and tail. Cook called him "something less than a greyhound, of mouse colour, very slender made and swift of foot."

Out of respect for legend, and anyone who knows the bush must respect legend, especially when it is reinforced by the discovery of ancient bones, pride of place belongs to the fifteen-foot high, giant kangaroo, said to have roamed the inland. I like to think of him hopping grandly over his vast stone-age homeland, of which the scientist and explorer Wills wrote: "Rocks so old, they have forgotten the singing and the shouting of the sea, the violence of the earth in the making."

In such a setting, in South Australia, there lies the dry lake of Callabonna, from which the skeleton of *Diprotodon*, a distant relative of Kangaroo and Wombat, has been retrieved after seventy million years.

Marsupials of the kangaroo family come in sizes to suit all needs—or should it be pockets? Obviously the triangular build of the kangaroo was adapted by nature to give these creatures the best chance of survival. There are twenty species, from the great Red Boomer and the huge dark Wallaroo, to the graceful Lavender; then down by steps which include wallabies, "paddy melons," and marsupial rats and mice. There are also tree kangaroos which are shorter in the hind legs than their cousins of plain and mountain.

Unfortunately two kangaroos eat as much grass as three sheep, but their skins are good for boots and gloves among other things—circumstances which contribute to their destruction.

The manner of the birth of a baby Joey was a mystery for years. Now we know that the doe kangaroo gives birth to a tiny, naked creature, probably less than an inch long, for which she prepares a smooth surface by licking a pathway to her pouch. Once inside the pouch the little thing fastens itself to a nipple, and there it stays until it outgrows its cradle.

It is a pitiful thing to see a doe kangaroo throw her Joey from the pouch when hunted, in an effort to save it by drawing the dogs after herself. It is equally pitiful to see a great Boomer sacrifice his life to

## *The Landscape*

keep hunters and their dogs away from his family; running until exhausted and turning, perhaps waist deep in a swamp, to fight his attackers with the ripping nails on the toes of his strong hind legs.

Another dyed-in-the-wool Australian, also a marsupial, and a teetotaler if ever you saw one, is Koala, the little native bear, whose name means "nothing to drink" (a truthful description of its tastes). Koalas are completely charming, even if their woolly coats do become insect-infested, and they smell like uncorked eucalyptus bottles. Billy Bluegum is one Australian who can never enlarge his mind by seeing the world. Quite rightly, his Government refuses him a passport, for he cannot live long on anything save his own kind of gum leaves.

Koalas have a unique arrangement of their fingers, which grow in groups of two and then three, and they have wise old-gentlemen's faces with boot-blackened noses and fur-coated, Clark Gable ears. With their cuddly bodies and little, holding hands, it is difficult to understand how anyone short of a psychopathic case could ever hurt them. Add to their physical helplessness the fact that they sit up and cry like piteous children when they are hurt or frightened, and the "it's a fine day—let's kill something" attitude of the moronic sportsman becomes even less comprehensible. Yet the koala has, at times, been in danger of extinction.

It is a charming sight to see a mother koala mounting a tree with a tiny replica of herself clinging to her back. It was even more splendid for me as a child, ill with measles and loneliness, to wake and see in the flickering shadows thrown by the night light a grey bear clinging to the curtains over the door facing my cot.

Probably the most wonderful moment of my whole life was when my mother lifted the little thing gently away from the curtains and put it in my arms, and I *knew* it was alive . . . and mine! Feverish, spotty and revolting though I was, I was also undoubtedly the happiest child in the whole world at that moment.

But the bush night is not always filled with joy. Wild life moves around one on the nights of full moon, when the land is covered in a broth of white light, and lying in bed you can hear as well as sense the urgent life of the bush that is about you, its cruelty and its beauty. Often have I heard the savage cry of the Australian wild dog, the Warrigal of the Aborigines, the Yellow Dog Dingo of Kipling. Every sheepman's hand is against him, for he is a killer without appetite, a distinction more often reserved for Man.

On a moonlit night of savage playfulness, a dingo may go through a

## *As Nature Left It*

flock of hundreds of sheep, destroying them with his characteristic slashing of their bellies. Yellow Dog Dingo is among the cleverest of animals. Bushmen who know every trick in his book, and who credit him with being able to count up to five, will often camp out for months on end near where a pair of dingoes are known to be hiding out. Yet Man, with all his wit, cannot be certain he will destroy them for they evade guns, traps and poison with all the cleverness of a secret agent. But the intensive war against him gives Dingo small hope of survival; and even more destructive of the pure blood-line is cross breeding with domestic dogs.

Nobody is certain of the dingo's origin. Some say he and the black man crossed the eastern land bridge together, or travelled with Malayan sea-raiders when their proas had become rather more than hollowed-out logs. Perhaps Gondwanaland was more than a myth, and the dingoes wandered southwards from what we now call India. These theories apart, dingo bones have been discovered in company that seems to prove an antiquity dating long before man came to the continent.

He is nocturnal, and usually a lone hunter, but sometimes runs in packs of four or six. At mating time, he fills the night with his sorrowful moans, and in his desolate, wavering call is all that the Yellow Dog has missed: his right to the love and protection of Man, the weariness of being eternally driven, the sorrow of a creature that has put itself beyond the pale.

Then another sound comes through the night, a sound expressing fear and pain, and your mind's eye constructs the moment leading up to this cry that cuts the air, to where a harmless little frog hops along a garden bed. Behind it a sinuous black shape draws near, its slate-coloured body giving back a scum of light. The frog makes preoccupied hops . . . and the snake strikes. For a second the squealing of the frog is full of hurt and terror; if you are a child you put your hands over your ears and wait appalled for silence.

But I am convinced that fear of snakes is an attitude of mind presented ready made to a child by foolish adults. It is an unworthy attitude in an intelligent mind. So often in snake-infested lands, seeing the unnecessary terror of other women, I have breathed a prayer of gratitude to a childhood friend, a nine-foot carpet snake (a sort of python) which I learned to handle. It seems wrong to put fear into a child's mind, and not to teach it how to handle a snake safely if the opportunity is there.

Carpet snakes are constrictors, and beautiful as Persian rugs. Kaa's job was to de-rat the meat-house; he was fat, sleepy and good natured.



## *The Landscape*

When he felt like a snack he left his hole under the floor and hunted in the rafters, from which long meat-hooks were suspended. If I found him not at home, I would stand so that he could slide down to my shoulders via a meat-hook, and he was so heavy I could hardly stagger beneath his weight.

It was my joy to turn the eggs in the old-fashioned incubator that looked more like a low-boy. One morning early I set out on this task, and when I opened the door there was Kaa coiled up in blissful warmth, sleeping it off after about forty half-hatched eggs. Svelte in his hunger he had managed to get in, but once the eggs were down he looked like a gigantic bead necklace, and finding he could not get out with knobs on he had settled down in his philosophical way to sleep.

I was upset when I thought how angry my parents would be at the loss of the eggs, but as Kaa was on the top shelf and simply would not stir, I could not lift him down. After a good deal of architectural work with old boxes I managed to drag him off the shelf and across my shoulders. Then I wobbled down from the boxes and staggered along to the meat houses, with the long tail of my living boa dragging in the dust. Being a bush child, I removed the tell-tale tracks and hastened back to the incubator to return everything to normal; then I crept back into the house and no one ever discovered the criminal although suspicion was rife.

It was big-hearted of me to protect the thief, because among the hen's eggs were two great treasures. A pelican, the Australian variety which has a black back, had circled down and laid two eggs in an outdoor fowl's nest; then, obviously the flighty type, it had taken off without a backward glance. Owing to Kaa, I still do not know how long it takes pelican eggs to hatch.

There are many interesting varieties of poison snakes and comparatively few fatalities from them. In any case, it is no help being afraid of these beautiful but damned reptiles. In years of catching and studying snakes as an interested amateur, I have nearly bought trouble only three times.

Once it was because a kookaburra friend of mine wanted to give me a present. I adore these laughing birds, and they are great snake eaters. My friend, who haunted the garden, for some reason decided to present me with a baby tiger snake. He had probably eaten the rest of the family and thought to make a magnificent gesture by giving me the last one. He often presented me with earthworms by the simple method of flying low over my bending body and dropping the worms on the back of

## *As Nature Left It*

my neck, and he proposed doing the same thing with the tiger snake—only I saw him first, and I saw, too, that the snake was alive.

I ran from him while he flapped energetically after me, like an outraged clubman who cannot believe a friend is refusing to drink with him. Finally, he dropped the snake, missing me by inches, and then flew off in a huff; and all the time I was remembering that, while a tiger snake's poison fangs are short and secrete little venom, that little is still the most deadly venom known.

To most people Australian snakes are either black or brown, but there is really a great variation of colour. Kaa's family tree, as with all pythons, water snakes, and taipan in North Queensland, probably originated in New Guinea. Driftwood carried reptiles to Cape York, and from there they migrated southward.

The commonest varieties of venomous snakes are black snakes which have red or blue bellies. They are great swimmers, but during droughts sometimes get caught and drown in river weeds. Death adders are more rare; they are fat, sluggish, diamond headed and very lethal.

Out walking one day, I decided to push my book into a hollow log. I forgot it, and went back next day, foolishly putting my hand straight into the hollow without looking. Such stupidity is as good as any other way of committing suicide, but I was lucky. I wore a silk blouse with long, cuffed sleeves. As my fingers touched the book something hit my wrist, and pulling my hand out I found my sleeve weighted by a death adder that had fortunately caught its fangs in the silk, the fatal green poison stain spreading downwards from the enmeshed fangs. I was untouched. The Aboriginal name for these things is "Moorroobie," and it is the only pretty thing about them.

In spite of all the stories about venomous snakes many people have been in the country for years and never seen one. Normally they are the least of your worries because they usually see *you* first, and snakes are terribly afraid of humans.

There is another and harmless member of the reptile family who makes a charming pet, but not for everyone since he needs constant care and suffers deeply if neglected. This little fellow who comes from the dry inland is a miniature dragon with the official name of Moloch Horridus, or Mountain Devil Lizard. He is not a devil, nor is he horrid; he is gentle and charming, and, in the grotesque way of his homeland, he is beautiful.

Unfortunately, these little dragons eat only one kind of ant; they drink through their skins and have to be dunked in water almost daily.

## *The Landscape*

They need their ants alive, and consume a couple of thousand every day, tapering off a little in winter although not really hibernating.

Little dragons are camouflage experts. They turn all sorts of colours, from black and white to vivid red or yellow. They have a bump behind their heads which makes a false head to deceive their enemies, usually birds. The small bodies, not much longer than your hand, are covered in prickles which look like growing thorns. Moloch becomes rather drab before a slough, but afterwards he turns rainbow-bright.

Snakes, as I have said, are to me an attitude of mind, and so are spiders, which are certainly one of the most interesting forms of life and possibly the oldest; real interest allows no room for fear. Australia has no more spiders than anywhere else, but it has some that are unique and a few that are dangerous but easy to recognise. It is inexcusable to destroy them all for the sins of the few.

The red back, or jockey spider is dangerous. The death rate of those bitten is not high, but the bite is very painful. Most frightening is atrax, the funnel spider, which is large, black, and glossy. It lives in natural cavities, and modestly weaves a silken curtain before its door. Atrax has two great poison fangs, and the venom clots human blood.

Most trapdoor spiders are harmless. One of them, the wolf spider, carries the full complement of her babies on her back, and at a casual glance she looks like a lady who has just acquired a Persian lamb coat; each tiny curl is a wolf "cub." They are poor jockeys and mother is kept busy replacing fallen babies.

Baby spiders weave replicas of the webs woven by their parents, which simply proves that weaving is instinctive, but it seems almost as clever as hearing a French child speaking French. Spiders spin both web and trapping silk. Trapping silk is used by a purely Australian species which lassoes its victim with a web-thread weighted by a drop of sticky fluid on the end—in the way that Gauchos heave a weighted bolo. The spiders really do whirl this lariat-fashion, and having made a good cast they proceed to reel their victim in, combining cowboy stuff with angling.

In Victorian dusks, ladies were like to swoon at the approach of pretty little pipistrel, the bat. What would they have done, I wonder, if a flying fox had suddenly swooped near to them on his great, sooty wings, grinning with the face of a small devil? Flying Fox is a link in the chain of evolution somewhere between bird and mammal.

One of Cook's seamen was the first to see and describe one as "black as a devil with two horns on its head!" These must have been its ears.

## *As Nature Left It*

With their black wings stretching to eighteen inches, their snarling faces and their clumsy land gait, like broken umbrellas trying to walk, they are very devilish to look at, but they are also interesting.

An invasion of flying foxes may start early in the afternoon when the vanguard begins streaming in a wide black smudge from the sunset lands. In their millions they come, hour after hour, and owners of crops and orchards pray that they will fly onwards.

On one such invasion of my home they settled about a mile up-river and hung from the branches of the great gum trees and willows in huge sooty curtains of black, upside down, fastened to each other by the hooks at the end of their wings. Often a stout bough broke with a crackling, thunderous sound from the combined weight of thousands of bodies, and a cloud of creatures launched themselves into the sky.

In an attempt to dislodge them, my father armed with a large-bore gun, and I, prepared to defend myself to the last ditch with an umbrella, set forth upriver in a flat-bottomed boat. With the first shot they rose, an enormous screaming blanket of black that obscured the sun. The next charge of shot brought my umbrella into play when the wounded began to fall around us, one right on to the opened umbrella. It flopped off on to the bottom of the boat and reared its devil-bird's body back on to its musty wings, its eyes red with fury, its white, pointed teeth showing, and how it screamed!

The moment the shooting stopped, great swirls of black-winged creatures settled themselves once more, hanging upside down from the branches in a sort of devil's curtain, or perhaps more like a solid web dotted with cocoons, and there they stayed for three days until of their own accord they rose and moved on, leaving a desolation of broken branches, fouled banks, and a horribly musky smell.

Flying Fox seems neither bird nor beast, and he makes a harsh, screaming noise . . . the unfriendliest of sounds. But there is nothing unfriendly about Kookaburra, the feathered Falstaff of the bush, in whose robust laughter you can hear the spirit of the land. His chuckling, graduating to full merriment, shakes his round brown body, his big head and absurd stumpy tail, in gusty delight. Baby spiders weave as well as their parents do, but baby kookaburras have to learn to laugh, mimicking their parents with hoarse, chuckling baby-talk. Songless they may be, as the English poet Gordon complained, but oh, how enchantingly noisy!

The emu you meet so often in crosswords is rather like a poor man's ostrich, with its long, narrow feathers and lack of tail. It usually runs

## *The Landscape*

in groups of four to six, and to see an emu and her family is a charming sight. Emus can run very fast, and they make a curious drumming noise that terrifies horses. Their babies are enchanting, pure Disney, each one dressed in its small football jersey of brown and yellow stripes running horizontally, and with a tiny spotted "beanie" on its head. Providing they have not been too long out of their huge and handsome dark green eggs, they are often more inclined to run after strange humans than after their mother.

By far the most numerous bird-family group are the parrots, from tiny parakeets like flying jewels to the great black cockatoos. Flocks of rose-breasted galahs spread massed destruction over crops, and another grain eater is the sulphur-crested, white cockatoo.

The bush budgerigar is emerald green always: you may see the top wire of a fence crowded with these little beauties, go near them and they rise, a sudden shower of emeralds against the sky. It is the descendants of these little birds which are found in the English and American pet shops. The Japanese developed the first colour, a bright blue, and sold them for ten pounds a pair, but the ease with which they bred to colours soon brought this down to ten shillings.

Cockatoos lead community lives, and because of this the Aborigines used to harry great flocks with their boomerangs. The wretched birds could not understand the back-curving flight of the boomerang and were left screaming, and fluttering their broken wings, when they might have escaped a straight-flying weapon.

Another big, but harmless bird is a lanky grey fellow with a reddish face and back of the head, called brolga or native companion. Brolga is a Monsieur Beaucaire of the bird world, a versatile dancer. As he warms up he loses his Versailles manner, and hurls himself through the Dashing White Sergeant and so on to the fancy shirt and M.C. stuff of the Rockies. Then he tapers off into square dances and graceful quadrilles. It is amazing to watch the ordered movements of these big, crane-like birds, set against the austere background of plain and sky.

Most distinctively Australian of all birds are the lyre and bower birds, natives of Victoria and New South Wales. In full display the male lyre bird spreads a tail shaped like a delicately-feathered lyre of biscuit and brown. They are running birds and very timid. It is extremely hard to identify one because they imitate other birds so perfectly that you do not realise you are listening to the prince of mocking birds.

These birds build wonderful nests, like two-sectioned domes, and often on top of a tree fern. The bottom half of the nest is woven of

## *As Nature Left It*

flexible roots and twigs and lined with feathers; the "roof" is made from ferns and mosses, and other debris. They lay a single egg once a year, a beautiful thing, ash-coloured, spotted with brown.

Possibly first cousin to the lyre is the bower bird which makes a permanent, and elaborately decorated home of its nest which may cover a fourteen-foot area, between two trees, with decorations of fern fronds leading up to it. A heap of shells, flowers, bright pieces of peeled white wood and other treasures are gathered in front of the nest, for the bower bird is a great collector of *objets d'art*. These birds are a unique and beautiful part of the Australian heritage.

Of all lands, surely Australia must be the most fascinating to evolutionists. A discovery made on the Burnett River in 1869 ranks with the recent capture of the Coelocanth. A farmer named William Foster sent the Sydney Museum a specimen of a fish he called the Burnett salmon, and which the blacks called Dyella: a portly, eel-like fish about five feet long, covered in large greenish scales and having four fins. Most intriguing part of all, it had four teeth of a type found only in deposits of ancient rock, and corresponding to the teeth of no living fish. A scientist had named the owner of the four archaic teeth Cerodotus, and the Burnett Dyella-Cerodotus was the first living, or even complete fish of the kind ever seen.

Cerodotus is a lung fish; it has gills and a single lung. It does not estivate (which is what sleeping in mud is called if you are a fish and not a human being doing it to slim) as do its more up-to-date cousins in other lands. Cerodotus has gone through four hundred million years on the principle that what was good enough for mum and dad was good enough for it, and it lives through droughts just as long as its gills are kept wet. It is carnivorous, devouring small animals, coming to the surface and making an odd noise gulping air, and laying its eggs on river plants.

Droughts have always been Australia's portion so the reptiles of the more arid parts have evolved their own way of dealing with them. While the Dyella does not estivate, there is a frog which does. It uses the same technique as the Aboriginal children of the inland who drink until their tummies swell like balloons. This frog distends itself with water, packs itself into a tasty mud-cake and thumbs its nose at the cruel blue sky, the flaming sunlight, when the only moisture besides its internal supply seems to be in the shimmering air that looks like water running eternally down a vast windowpane.

Through the ages, as with all continents, animal life has depended

## *The Landscape*

for its development on plant life, whether the animals were carnivorous or, as in the case of marsupials, vegetarian. Animal growth and increase comes from the food and shelter found among the growing things of the soil.

In Central Australia the scene changes swiftly when rain falls in "islands" of wetness. The arid, sparse lands with their thousands of square miles of gravel, sand, and the smooth round stones called "gibbers," are fixed by spiny grass and spinifex. The only drinkable water is in the tribal "soaks" of the Aborigines, which mean life itself to the blacks and have been carefully hidden by them since time immemorial.

As the rain soaks into the patches of desert they become carpeted in grass, or in the blinding brilliance of the Sturt pea which, looked at closely, resembles the massed heads of parakeets. Goodness knows from where, but life suddenly appears out of the wastes. It may be kangaroos, goannas, a flock of birds, but *something* finds these tiny, temporary oases, to disappear just as quickly when drought descends again.

Australia's flora is adapted for droughty conditions and many trees and plants have leaves designed to conserve moisture. This is so with the stiff leaves of the waratah, banksia, boronia, and eucalyptus, all of which have an aromatic smell, for oil exudes from the leaves and acts as a barrier against dry air and evaporation. The leaves of some gums turn sideways to the sun to conserve moisture.

If you are in London and want to make a vicarious visit to the bush, then breathe deeply in the Australian plant house at Kew Gardens and you will get a hint of the distinctive scent of the bush; the clean sweetness of maidenhair fern; the perfume of boronia overtoned by the aromatic exhalation of gums. It brings a nostalgia as keen as any that comes to the Northerner smelling again "the tangle o' the isles," or to the Corsican, returning from exile, when the maquis-laden breeze first reaches him. The smell of crushed eucalyptus leaves, even a bottle of the oil with the cork out, is the kind of thing that Kipling meant when he wrote that "smells are surer than sights or sounds."

Gum trees are uniquely Australian; their names are legion, from the chauvinistic red, white and blue gums, to the peppermint and spearwood. Some are thin-barked and lemon scented; some are thick and fibrous, like the woollybark. Some shed their outer sheaths of bark and strips hang down until the wind twirls them away. Having cast their cloths, they emerge in snow-white splendour. In Gippsland, Victoria, I have seen

## *As Nature Left It*

fine gum trees bearing great, healed scars—oval markings where the Aborigines have cut bark for their canoes.

There are about three hundred and twenty known varieties of eucalyptus; I find the greatest beauty in the tall silver and mauve streaked trunks of the silver gums, satin smooth and shining in the moonlight. As a symbol of the spirit of the country, I think I would take the iron bark with its rugged, furrowed skin, a tree that is as difficult to fell as it is to kill an Australian pest.

Eucalypti give a sort of resin useful in tanning and dyeing, which can be scraped from the bark without killing the tree. The oil is used for many things—linaments, inhalents and germicides. Often you find bush people who stuff their mattresses with gum leaves as a cure for aching joints, though whether the cure comes from the leaves or faith has never been proved.

Wattles are trees which are as much a part of Australia as kangaroos and dingoes. "Mimosa" is a fancy name for fancy trees grown decorous distances apart, but the sight of wattle spreading out before you in a sea of scented gold—well, only a European who had never been to Australia could think the two names meant the same tree.

Wattles belong to the acacia family, and these with the eucalypti form the majority of trees all over Australia. There are six hundred species of native wattle. It is so sturdy it grows on waste land. Green wattle has tiny golden flowers and delicate feathery fronds; but golden wattle has "solid" elongated leaves of dark green, and the flowers are fairy-sized yellow bottlebrushes.

Early settlers found the Aborigines making wickerwork from pliant saplings, so they copied them and built their huts in the same fashion. They called this type of building "wattle and daub" from the kind of thing they had known at home, and these tough, bendable trees acquired the name of wattle.

Other reminders of the hard, pioneering days linger over names given by the early settlers to such plants as the low, impenetrable bush that is still called "dead finish," and another growing obstacle, "wait awhile."

Wildflowers grow in great profusion in the east. There are delicate three-petalled fringed violets; and in sandy soil that curiously lovely dressmaker's triumph, flannel flower, its dead white petals looking exactly as though they had been stamped from flannel. One flame-coloured wildflower looks like tiny spoked wheels and is called "wheel of fire." It claims the same family tree as the waratah, which is the floral emblem



## *The Landscape*

of New South Wales : a handsome, bizarre growth in a stiff lino-cut way, with lanceolate leaves and large, stiff-petalled crimson flowers that seem to have come from another age, as indeed they have. They "glow like lamps along the bare ridges."

Ferns of all kinds, particularly tree ferns, are a feature of gullies and bushlands. The Illawarra palm is probably the tallest and most "eastern" looking. Northern Queensland has its own peculiarities of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, owing to its closer link with New Guinea and Malaya. In the lushness of its tropical jungles grow ferns, lianas and orchids.

Among the fascinations of the north are rivers swarming with crocodiles, said to grow to a length of thirty feet. A vegetable peculiarity is the strange mangrove tree, supported on arched roots high above the turbid water of the swamps. Architecturally it is built for perfect resistance to the movement of water, but human eyes have an uncomfortable sense of peeking at a piece of nature's plumbing.

It is in North Queensland that you get the real flavour of the East. Just to rise in the morning and scoop out half of a fragrant, freshly-picked pineapple for breakfast is a luxury never forgotten. Then there is a choice of the odd *monstera deliciosa*, a sort of reptile vegetable, an elongated cucumber with its outer skin segmented like a dragon's and with the flavour of a dozen fruits inside; or perhaps a glass of passion fruit with fresh cream or, for the more exotic taste, a touch of port wine. It is a difficult decision to choose between these and soursop, bullock's heart, or the scented coolness of a custard apple, and you realise that the well-known glamour of the East is not entirely composed of moonlight, dark eyes, hot breaths on innocent napes, but of something far, far more enduring.

Malaya fathered North Queensland's vegetation, and gave it much of the same tropical beauty. To see tall coco-nut palms and poincianas, to enjoy the perfume and richness of frangipannis creamy-golden against the vivid blue of jacarandas, is to know beauty indeed.

The jungles give way to sparser country where anthills rise like dry, goblin castles from the earth. Then there are tracts of kangaroo grass, and queer banyan and bottle trees. Thirsty travellers, beware of the fallacy that you simply cut a bottle tree and a stream of water gushes forth! A tree *may* have hollows at the base of the limbs that store water, but these are by no means certain reservoirs.

In the diagonally opposite corner of the continent, in Western Australia, are the dramatic timber lands, the karri and jarrah forests.

## *As Nature Left It*

Here, too, in pride, live the true black swans. Here are blackboys (the first of all trees, with a thick trunk and bushy top, looking like a woolly head with tips of spears sticking out of it) and grass trees (almost as primitive). Here are quandong trees with their thick, leathery leaves and red globes of fruit that make delicious jams and jellies, and here, perhaps loveliest of all, are red flowering gums.

Gruesome creatures, seeming neither animal nor vegetable but dire "Things" from another planet, are the west's ghoulish insectivorous plants. Marauding insects skid on a waxed, slippery-slide which lands them plonk in water mixed with a digestive substance that lies at the heart—or should it be stomach?—of the pitcher plant. Another plant with the innocuous name of sundew, has tiny fringed tentacles tipped with a sweet and sticky juice, and is more terrible to tiny insects than the kraken ever was to seamen of old. Not the least fascination of the Western Australian wildflowers are their names: "kangaroo's paws," "cocky's tongues," "blue mist."

Many strangely beautiful things of blood or sap have had to be left out of this small introduction to the living, growing things of Australia; otherwise it might have read like a zoological guide or a seed catalogue. If I have erred in choosing my own favourites, I can only hope that even so I have given you some small understanding of the prickly pride we have in our unusual heritage.

Australia has little of garden prettiness. One must not expect the kind of beauty that has grown from the care of loving hands through centuries, but remember more the impact from the bitter vastness of a surrealist landscape.

Australia is a land of sweeping plains with the spare beauty and austerity of a statue as against the softer beauty of paint. Its lines are drawn with the scalpel rather than the paint brush. There are great dun spaces backed by jagged mountains which pierce the sky, but on these plains tall grey birds dance; the cruel outlines of the mountains may be misted suddenly in a sapphire veil, or the peaks stand silhouetted against a sunset sky turning from pure, amygdaline delicacy to a wide fountain of blazing colour. On the wastelands of sand, gibbers and grey-green mulga bushes appear splashes of vivid colour where storm rains have fallen. A sky of burning blue delights behind the grey-green of gum leaves throwing a mere confetti of dappled shadows on to the bare brown earth.

Australia has the world's most savagely beautiful coast line; crescent beaches of golden sand burn like the treasure of the Incas beneath fiery

### *The Landscape*

sunlight; enormous waves of melted emerald topped by diamond spray pound the beaches eternally.

Beauty, power, savagery, Australia has all these. She has towering trees, rolling grasslands, and plants with the strange beauties of forgotten ages. She has gentle animals, exotic birds, and few hidden terrors. To the casual, European eye, she may seem at first a little sombre, a little harsh, a little loveless. But to those who know her, the Australian scene has an unforgettable fascination which fills their hearts with joy.

## THE PEOPLE I

---

*This continent of teeming cities and empty landscapes, of contour ploughing and haggard rocks, is exactly 2,974,581 square miles in area. That is a lot of land. Occupying it, at the last count, were 8,700,440 Europeans and 71,895 Aborigines and half castes. That is very few people. Australia is the sixth biggest nation in the world in terms of physical size. In terms of population it is forty-fifth. The discrepancy worries thoughtful Australians, and it is easy to guess what it does to thoughtful Asians.*

*Since the second world war, earnest (one might almost say desperate) efforts have been made to bring in more people, for the war showed how easily the population might have been increased by an influx of Japanese. Post-war migrants have been limited by the long-standing selective immigration policy to persons of European stock.*

*In pre-war days, these migrants would have found themselves labelled "pommies," "reffos," "dagos." Nowadays they are called "new Australians." Consciously it has been decided there is a national character, and consciously it has been decided that rude words about foreigners must cease to be a part of that character. But only about foreigners. Rude words in general stay where they have always been—on the tip of every Australian tongue.*

*The tongue and the character, and the thought of possible conflict in the future, all spring to mind in this consideration of the Australian serviceman. From his past actions has come a strong sense of distinctive national character. On his future actions may depend the continued existence of the nation. The author served as a private soldier in Malaya, where he was captured and held prisoner for three and a half years—an experience vividly recorded in his book *The Naked Island*.*

# The Australian Serviceman

RUSSELL BRADDON

As HE walked up the road of a Japanese prisoner-of-war compound, an English regular Army Major turned to a brother English officer and commented: "You know, Sandy, *some* of these Australians aren't bad blokes." To the British regular soldier that is about as accurate a definition of the completely irregular Commonwealth serviceman as is possible. No Briton will ever really know how the mind of the Australian soldier works.

And yet it is simple enough.

Until the Boer War there were no Australian soldiers serving abroad. During the Boer War a few of those who wanted to travel, or see South Africa, or get away from it all, or collect souvenirs, volunteered for service. There were not many of them, and those who did go were generally regarded as adventurers rather than patriots. They returned some months later: and whether they had fought Boers or not in the meantime no one really troubled to inquire. The newly-formed Commonwealth was much too busy with its own highly individualistic teething problems to be even faintly interested in anything so foolish or remote as a war.

Indeed, Australians at this time, and for over a hundred and twelve years before, had been wholly preoccupied with the development and pioneering problems of a new country. They had never given a thought to soldiering. On the contrary, they had already developed a national and unsoldierly sense of independence, of individual independence which boded ill for any sergeant-major who in the future might bellow, "Well, you're not here to think: you're here to do what you're bloody well *told*."

In the years before the Great War, compulsory military service was introduced and the Royal Australian Navy was founded. This compulsory militia training established the fact once and for all that though Australians enjoy the camaraderie of service life and take kindly to such positive forms of martial education as bayonet fighting and letting off

## *The Australian Serviceman*

guns or rifles, they are positively averse to any such formal aspects of discipline as saluting officers or practising ceremonial drill. What qualities they might have possessed as fighting men were unknown because they were never called upon—in fact never contemplated being called upon—to fight.

Then came the Great War—and with it the immediate threat to Britain of direct physical attack by Germany. For the first time in her history Australia saw the mother country actually in danger. This was no souvenir-chasing campaign across South African veldt, no minor clash on some remote Indian frontier . . . this was a European onslaught on the United Kingdom, and straight away that deep sentiment for Britain innate in the new dominion flared into life, and Australia's young men flocked to the cities to volunteer for active service overseas.

These men were known, collectively, as the A.I.F.: the Australian Imperial Force. And it was from nothing—no past, no traditions, no memorable pristine glories, not even a few élite regiments to form their nucleus—that this first A.I.F. created the exuberant pattern which all subsequent Australian expeditionary forces have followed, and will always follow. Theirs was the example of courage in hand-to-hand fighting, of indiscipline on the parade ground and behind the lines, of scrounging, of inviolable camaraderie and unsurpassed bad language, upon which all recruits ever since have been happy and proud to model themselves.

Looked at coolly, and without conventional prejudices this is not such a difficult military code to accept as practicable.

All the members of the A.I.F., of whatever war, are volunteers. They volunteer for service in the ranks. University students, road-diggers, wealthy graziers, shearers, bankers, and lawyers, find themselves lumped cheerfully together as privates. All their lives they have been their own masters, used their own minds, respected no one whom they had not found worthy of respect—and the habit was not to die the first day they enlisted. On the contrary, it flourished.

Thus N.C.O.s who were not respected could get nothing done; officers who would never have been saluted by Mr. Jones the civilian were not saluted by Private Jones the soldier; and orders which seemed obviously unwise or unnecessary to the collective mind of too highly individualistic individuals in each regiment or battalion were simply not obeyed. Right throughout his training period, and all his subsequent days in camp and behind the lines, this unorthodox independence of outlook was the Australian soldiers' prime characteristic. Yet once the

## *The People*

actual conflict threatened (as British staff officers, remembering the riotous events of leaves in Cairo, were startled to observe at the landing on Gallipoli) the same men swiftly abandoned their air of fractious questioning and unhesitatingly followed the orders of the day. Battle itself is implicit with the need for one man to give instructions which all for the common good shall obey. But *until* the battle . . . then let every man, as he always has done, work things out for himself.

To the actual business of combat this new Australian army, in its first engagement at Gallipoli, brought a fierce self-conscious determination to prove its mettle. They and the New Zealanders landed on the Turkish-held peninsula along with French and British troops of established reputation and fighting prowess. They were acutely aware of the fact that they alone were unblooded. Perhaps this spurred them on. Whatever the cause, they attacked with furious *élan*, clawing their way up impossible slopes, and engaged the Turk in hand-to-hand fighting of spectacular violence.

During the long months of warfare that followed at Gallipoli they never once fell below this high standard they had set themselves. Almost arrogantly they maintained their reputation for ferocity and initiative. Thus it happened that, though before Gallipoli the Australian soldier had no Australian tradition from which to draw inspiration, ever since the Dardenelles campaign the spirit of Anzac has been a proud one, the title of "Digger" something to uphold.

In a typically sonorous and moving phrase, Churchill praised these men: "The power did not exist in the Turkish Empire to shake from its soil the grip of the Antipodes."

It was a decision of the British Government's which eventually removed the Anzacs from Gallipoli. And when the order to evacuate did come, the Australian soldiers—now leaner and less romantically minded about war, but quite as undaunted as when they had landed on the beaches long months before—were stunned. December 20, 1915, was the fateful day of the final withdrawal. Men demanded the privilege of leaving the hillsides *last*.

"We were first here," they insisted, "it is our right to stay till the last."

When many, as was inevitable, were ordered to leave in the first of two batches, some had themselves paraded to their commanding officers to demand why they were being victimised—what had they done wrong? they inquired.

Thus, along with the British, French, and New Zealand troops,

## *The Australian Serviceman*

the men from Australia emerged from their first ordeal by battle. They had entered it an unknown and dubious quantity. The way they fought with the bayonet; the coolness with which they caught bombs hurled at them from the trenches in front of them and hurled them vigorously back; the humour with which they signalled a miss to an enemy sniper by waving a shovel (butts fashion) over the parapet—a shovel whose blade would instantly be holed by the irate marksman opposite; the tireless energy with which they tunnelled under the Turkish trenches in an effort to *blow* him off the peninsula when all other means of removing him had failed; the frank and unswerving loyalty of the men to one another (“Can you make a place for me beside Jim, please? Me and him are mates and we’re going over together”)—all these qualities earned them the reputation of being tough, reliable, first-class fighters.

Away from the fighting, however, their discipline remained of the variety euphemistically known as lax. General Birdwood, then commanding all the Gallipoli forces, often told the story of his inspection of one of the camps to which these Australians, now en route to the Western front, were directed.

He passed a sentry standing by a gate. The sentry, whose rifle was leaning against the fence some yards away, and who was himself lounging comfortably against a post, showed very little interest in the be-plumed general who crossed his path. In fact he took no interest at all. He did not salute; he did not move; he continued to lounge languidly against his post. The general was not pleased. Briskly he marched up to the sentry.

“Soldier,” he said, “You didn’t salute me.”

“That’s right,” agreed the sentry.

“Why not?” demanded the general. The soldier shrugged away the absurdity of such a question.

“Do you know who I *am*?” demanded the general. The soldier surveyed him gloomily—surveyed him from the feathered plume in his hat right down to his immaculate boots.

“No idea,” he declared.

“I’m General Birdwood, your commander-in-chief,” the furious officer told him.

“Well, in that case,” replied the sentry, without rancour, “why don’t you shove your feathers up your — and fly away, like any other bird would?”

The story may well be apocryphal, but it was one the general fre-



## *The People*

quently told against himself: and, apocryphal or not, it is certainly more than possible.

So to France, where the Australian soldier joined the millions of other Allied soldiers in the static war of attrition which was known as The Western Front; and where, his fighting qualities being submerged in the general welter of blood, his reputation for verve and originality now depended upon his superlative skill as a scrounger and the ruthlessness with which he massacred the French language. By the end of the war all the world knew the word "Digger."

The end of the war also saw the Australian Flying Corps firmly established. And the Australian Navy, with an early victory in the single ship combat against the German *Emden*, had quickly stamped itself as an efficient fighting entity, however small.

Then came peace, and the servicemen of Australia returned to their civilian occupations. Things military were almost totally forgotten for the next twenty years.

In that twenty years a new generation grew up which was equally as independent and irrepressible in its outlook as that of 1914. But this generation matured to the tradition of its fathers who had fought in the Great War. For the first time in its history, Australia's sons were the sons of soldiers. They knew that Australians had made good fighters and they appreciated the Anzac tradition; but they were no more military minded in 1939 than their fathers had been in 1914. On the contrary, they grew up to paternal stories of how to scrounge, play two-up, evade duties and go A.W.L. which enabled them (when their turn arrived in 1939) to get off in the services to what can only be described as a flying start.

When the crisis of World War II did arrive, the youth of the Commonwealth once again flocked to the city recruiting centres to volunteer for services overseas—to volunteer for the second A.I.F., for the Empire Air Training Scheme, for the Royal Australian Navy. In those days to be merely a member of the local militia was to have heaped on one's head the coals of fire of the cry "Choco" which meant "chocolate soldier," or no real soldier at all.

The steady stream of volunteers into the Forces meant that soon Australians were in Canada learning to fly, in Britain actually flying, in the Middle East preparing for the desert war, in ships of the Royal Navy to which they had been attached for instruction. They spread all over the Allied world, but they remained distinctively Australian wherever they went.

## *The Australian Serviceman*

However, it was essentially the soldier who maintained the erratic reputation for individuality which is the Commonwealth's pride. The lads of the Air Force were in highly competitive training schools where behaviour, as well as skill, counted if one were to be allowed to fly Hurricanes. The Navy recruits were eventually drafted to ships, and on the ships of an active, sea-going fleet there is no room for nonsense. But to the scores of thousands of youngsters who sought a place in the army, there was room for very little else. They found themselves in the same camps that their fathers had occupied, with the same rifles (of the same vintage) that their fathers had had, and with practically no ammunition, armour, artillery or transport to give a war-like atmosphere to their initial training.

To instruct them, therefore, Australian Staff Corps specialists had to compel their high-spirited charges to indulge in make-believe. Thus infantrymen fired solemnly at targets with no bullets in their rifles; machine-gunners learnt the intricacies of machine-gun stoppages from diagrams drawn in a diverting series of coloured chalks on a blackboard; and greatest indignity of all, artillerymen practised gun drill round guns that were not there.

But they enjoyed their life and the companionship, these new soldiers: and the *esprit de corps* of each battalion and regiment was superb. Indeed, so high was their morale that when units were kept too long in training, too long away from the fighting overseas for which they had volunteered, they brought their grievance to the attention of authority by "jacking up" . . . jacking up so that they would be sent away on active service.

This jacking up is a procedure which no army but the Australian could tolerate. It is not mutiny, and yet it is decidedly not a course of action laid down by any army regulations. It consists simply of selecting some minor regimental parade or order and boycotting it, to a man, as a public expression of a legitimate grievance.

Thus, when in one unit the cooking, even by army standards, became abominable and the cook's gym shoes (lost then for some six weeks) were found by a suspicious private in the bottom of the soup cauldron, the unit jacked up. The mess parade was unanimously boycotted. Immediately, though all other protests had been to no avail, Battalion Headquarters bestirred themselves and the cooking improved.

Similarly, when a certain N.C.O. behaved badly, the Battery concerned dropped the guy ropes of all the sergeants' tents in the middle of the night. Next morning, punctually, on the parade which was called to unmask the perpetrator of this crime, the Battery jacked up. When

## *The People*

the order was given, "Man who cut the guy ropes of the sergeants' tents . . . one pace . . . forward march," the Battery stepped forward to a man. Finally, all attempts to break down this unanimity of action having failed, the investigation was abandoned. The N.C.O. concerned thereafter became considerably more scrupulous in his behaviour.

And again, when Higher Command gave no indication of ever shipping these mettlesome units overseas, many of them jacked up. Eastern Command had issued a series of orders that bad language must cease, saluting increase and the revolting practice whilst travelling on public conveyances of frequently omitting to pay fares must be amended. Thereupon, pursuing the jack-up policy, army language became appalling, saluting ceased altogether and no fares were paid on any occasions. To add point to their expression of displeasure men went A.W.L. in droves, drank to excess and were generally as difficult as possible. All the time they complained: "We have been training for twelve months. Send us overseas to fight."

Always, of course, it was on the complete unanimity of action that the success of these unconventional actions depended. That they were unanimous, however, is not surprising. Though the Australian may not be appreciative of the virtues of discipline in its classic, military sense, the communal discipline of "sticking together," is his battle creed.

Indeed no cry rings louder in the A.I.F. than this. It is expressed in the exhortation "*Don't bludge on your mates.*" Not bludging on one's mates embraces not shirking one's share of work, not failing one's companions in any crisis, not being cowardly in battle. It is a comprehensive term which, at one and the same time, is a creed and an injunction. It has far more compulsion over the men it governs than any Manual of Military Law. Both, it seems, are needed to prepare the Digger for battle.

But not all his time is spent preparing himself for battle. There are other sacred deities of the military life to which he must pay at least lip-service (and of which most soldiers of the Commonwealth are, in fact, devotees).

The first of these deities is "grog."

Grog is beer: and beer, to the A.I.F. is sacred. The first sound heard from any Australian convoy arriving in any foreign port will always be the cry "How's the beer?"

If beer is bad, then that particular country will be an unpopular one, and should the beer be non-existent, then that country becomes anathema. So the urgent question rings out across the waters as the ship begins to

## *The Australian Serviceman*

dock, and thousands of ears strain anxiously to catch the advance guard's faint but all-important answer. Without any doubt at all, the most debated aspect of logistics with the Australian garrisons in Tobruk, Palestine, Malaya, New Guinea, and a hundred rural camps throughout the Commonwealth itself was not the supply of guns, vehicles or ammunition. It was the guaranteeing of a minimum number of bottles per man per month of beer.

The greatest indignity that ever befell the hapless defenders of Darwin was not the Japanese air-raids, nor the fact that they never saw land action, nor the endless heat, nor the monotony of dry season followed by wet season (the two made equally intolerable by chronic dermatitis). What made Darwin an indignity was the fact that its garrison was issued not with beer, but with bottled cordial. This they christened, contemptuously, "lolly water": and weed killer could not have been more detested.

The second deity in the soldiers' hierarchy of off-duty gods is "Swy."

Swy is a game of chance, requiring the tossing of two or three pennies into the air and the betting of those who watch their rise and fall on whether they come down heads or tails. To play it requires no brains, much luck and a vast amount of capital. In spite of the fact that those who win at this game always fall into a clearly identifiable class—to which the majority can never hope to belong—it is *de rigueur* for all, at some time or other (preferably most) to play. This, the more so, since the authorities have always banned it.

As a result of the ban, no camp, fortress, garrison, aerodrome or any other service installation is complete without its "ring"—a well-worn patch of earth (usually behind the latrines) where the "boxer" or promoter, runs his regular school. There the masses nightly lose their hard-won Government pay to the bottomless pit which is the pocket of the privileged few who infallibly win. Wherever the cry of "Come in spinner" or "five bob he heads 'em" is heard, there one may be certain are Australians.

The third and final god of the A.I.F. is sport. If the Australian soldier devoted his energies towards the mastering of things martial with a quarter the ardour he does to playing cricket and football and hockey, or betting on racehorses, then indeed the Guards Brigade would be swiftly displaced as the world's most polished exponent of ceremonial drill.

So fanatical is this interest in things sporting that, every year of their imprisonment under the Japanese, Australian prisoners of war in Singapore

## *The People*

ran a sweep on the Melbourne Cup held 3,000 miles away at home. And within minutes of the race being won the lucky ticket holders were paid their prizes. This, be it appreciated, in spite of the fact that the penalty for listening to secret radio sets in those days was death.

Mention of these pirate radios brings to mind a story which indicates clearly the reckless initiative of many Australian soldiers.

The scene is Singapore, 1942. A young man of twenty-three made and concealed a wireless set in the bottom half of his water-bottle. The top half, securely sealed off, he kept full of water. As all the prisoners of the Japanese did in those days, he invariably carried this water-bottle with him when he went out on a party to work. This habit did not endear him to his companions, since its discovery would have meant appalling punishment for them all; but when, deciding that bluff was the safest policy, he also made a point of daily offering the party's guard a drink from his bottle, then their cup of displeasure was full.

However, in those days, one did not interfere with a fellow prisoner's affairs, so no effort was made to restrain him.

Eventually disaster fell. The party had been working for long hours loading bicycle parts on to a train. Since bicycle parts could be readily sold to the native population (who were entirely bicycle-borne) many a ball-bearing and a connecting chain link found its way into many an empty water-bottle. The crisis arrived when one of the sentries, parched by the tropic heat and the effort of watching his prisoners slaving under him, seized the nearest water-bottle, raised it to his lips and drank deeply.

Unfortunately for all, he drank not water but three large gulps of Singer lubricating oil and several inches of bicycle chain. His displeasure had to be seen to be believed.

Immediately all the men present were lined up and their bottles systematically emptied before the apoplectic eye of the guard. As each portion of loot fell to the ground the offender was savagely punished. But the immediate punishment was as nothing to what everyone knew must follow when the search reached the end of the line where stood a soldier whose bottle contained not only several hundred ball bearings but a radio set as well.

The penultimate man was searched, and duly thrashed. Then the guard, now beside himself with rage, reached the last offender. The bloodied party waited in anguished silence for the inescapable climax.

"Drink Nippon?" offered the radio operator affably, holding out his water-bottle. The guard looked at him blankly—and then, suddenly recognising his benefactor of many occasions in the past, he smiled.



DIGGERS IN KOREA : men of 3 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment



DIGGERS IN LONDON : on guard duty at Buckingham Palace at the  
time of Queen Elizabeth's coronation

## *The Australian Serviceman*

"You O.K.," he declared. "You Number One." He patted the Australian on his shoulder. The last water-bottle remained unsearched.

Such a feat of bluff is known to Australians as a "Ned Kelly." Mr. Kelly was a rather unsavoury bush-ranger of the last century who robbed banks and coaches and came to a sticky end. Around his name has grown up an entirely false aura of glamour. The words *Ned Kelly* now bring to mind the picture of a daring horseman who was a cross between Raffles and Robin Hood. Ignoring all the facts of the case we, as a nation, have chosen to endow him with the qualities of fearless courage, an almost medieval sense of chivalry and a wholly admirable talent for making money. Ned Kelly has to many become a sort of patron saint; and certainly to the men in the forces he is a constant source of example and inspiration.

It is phrases such as "do a Ned Kelly" that lend so much verve and colour to the Australian serviceman's vocabulary. Handicapped by an accent that is flat, to say the least of it, he nevertheless contrives to hold his own in any company by the sheer gusto of his idiom and the uninhibited quality of his adjectives. "Bloody," generally known as the *Great Australian Adjective*, is inserted liberally not only between words, but also between the syllables of a word. (Thus, "This bloody food is unbloodyeatable.") The most prosaic words acquire a sudden lyrical lustre when so treated; and though the great adjective is used with frequency it is often employed with such an unconscious ear for rhythm that its emphatic cadences become positively attractive.

It might be helpful to provide a short glossary of our idioms for any non-Australian reader who, won over by the simple charms of our service life, decides to join our army.

A man is not bilious: he is *crook in the guts*.

"*Don't come the raw prawn on me*" instructs one not to try any longer to pull the wool over the speaker's eyes.

"*He went mad and they shot him*" is the routine answer to any superior seeking the whereabouts of a subordinate. An alternative version is that he has "*gone for a ride on the padre's bike*." Both aim at combining the duty to answer a superior with the desire to impart no useful information.

"*Pull your head in*" or "*Pull your woolly skull in and give your feet a chance*" means merely "Shut up."

"*To go through*" or "*to shoot through*" both mean to vanish and usually imply absence without leave.

"*I'm drumming you*" is an emphatic way of stating "I am telling you."



## *The People*

"*To draw the crabs*" is to attract the unwelcome attention of some other party—usually the Powers-that-Be—either to one's presence or to one's work, both of which (in the circumstances) can safely be assumed to be wanting in quality.

*Good guts* or *The good oil* is news.

*A bludger* is a shirker.

*Drongo*: *No-hoper*: *Galah*, all these are derogatory terms. They imply stupidity in the person at whom the word is flung.

*Spine-bashing* is sleeping.

*Ear-bashing* is talking.

*Sheilas*: *Skirts*: *Sorts* or *Lines*, are girls.

*Grouse* (especially of either *Sheilas*, *Skirts*, *Sorts* or *Lines*) means good or attractive.

*Drack* (again especially of the female gender, in which case the ungallant phrase is "a drack sack") means poor or unattractive.

*Ridgy Didge* (derived from "rigid digger," in its turn meaning a straight-up soldier, and hence implying integrity) means "the truth." The phrase is used invariably either as a simple question "Ridgy Didge?" or as an unequivocal assurance: "Ridgy Didge!"

*Plonk*, wine that has neither a vintage year nor a bouquet, only a kick.

*Rotten*, a word which springs to mind by association with the last idiom, means drunk (*very drunk*).

*Cop this*, take this (usually unpleasant).

*To cop the lot* is to be the unhappy target of *all* the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

*A blue* is a fight: but—

*Bluey* is someone with red hair.

*To get down on something* is a euphemism which, in clear language, means to steal.

And so it goes on: endless idioms combining terse words with a mordant, almost lugubrious humour; a humour never more pungently employed than by those men of the Ninth Australian Division who, in this last war, found themselves defending the solitary fortress of Tobruk.

This garrison styled themselves "The Rats of Tobruk" and joyously accepted the title "The Twenty Thousand Thieves." Both these descriptions were originally applied to them by Lord Haw Haw from Berlin. He used the word "rats" to imply that they were trapped and must surely either flee or die; he referred to them as "thieves" by way of a jibe at the original convict element with which Australia was

## *The Australian Serviceman*

populated. Both jeers appealed to the sardonic Digger's mind, and both were seized by him, adopted with pride and made a source of moral strength in a situation where the physical odds were all against him.

Thus the rats held on in Tobruk for nine months instead of the seemingly impossible two that had originally been asked of them, and nothing that Rommel, armour, planes, or shelling, could do had any power to unearth them. Until the day they were relieved they remained hard pressed, but undaunted.

The course of the war saw servicemen from the comparatively small population of Australia all over the world. In Greece they fought bitterly across the classic battlegrounds of antiquity; on Crete they were captured with their British comrades; in Malaya they came to furious grips with the invader and were overwhelmed by circumstances rather than the enemy; in Sumatra and Timor they fell helplessly into the maw of the Imperial Japanese Army; in Syria they helped quell the Vichy French resistance; in the Mediterranean they fought with distinction against the Italian Fleet; in New Guinea raw militiamen, youngsters of nineteen and twenty, opposed the final Asian thrust against the Australian continent and, on the ridges, held the foe until reinforcements arrived—thus making possible the repulse of the Japanese along the Kokoda Trail and killing, once and for all, the A.I.F.'s derisive cry of "*Chocos*." Later, Commonwealth airmen took part, in ever increasing numbers, in the R.A.F.'s heavy bomber raids over Germany; the surviving divisions of the A.I.F. fought with the Americans and British from the easternmost tip of New Guinea right through to Borneo; the Navy participated in the battles round the Philippines and endured heavy attacks from the Japanese *Kamikaze*. But the supreme tribute to the Commonwealth's military prowess, of course, was their place of honour as spearhead of the decisive offensive at Alamein,

So the war ended. Back came the bomb crews from Britain, the pilots from India, the P.O.W.s from Germany and those too from Malaya (these last with a curiously mixed reputation for being, at one and the same time, the greatest thieves and yet the best disciplined community in the Japanese compounds). Back they all came: the R.A.A.F. from Canada, and the United States, the Navy from Kure and the islands, the Army from New Guinea and Darwin—the Army inevitably shouting from their homing convoys, as they steamed into harbour, "How's the beer?"

Back they all came (these civilian soldiers, sailors and airmen who had modelled themselves so determinedly on the paternal pattern of

## *The People*

Anzac) having shed a little of their chauvinism, added quite a lot to the newly-found tradition of what an Australian serviceman should be, and moderated in their behaviour, when not actually in battle, not at all.

So they put some of their accrued pay into Government loan, accepted their discharges without regret, and returned to their proper niche in life—civvy street. In spite of the fact, however, that all through their service careers these men had declared that their only military ambition was to become Returned Soldiers, and in spite of the fact that they now seized their renewed civilian status with fervour, having been a member of the services was and is to an Australian of supreme personal significance.

It is the only truly national act of self-dedication available to him. The badge of the Commonwealth Military Forces, the rising sun whose rays are bayonet points, is the only peculiarly Australian emblem of service. In every other respect all our loyalties are—as they should be—dual loyalties . . . loyalties both to Australia and to the Crown which is our head in the United Kingdom.

Thus there is no peculiarly Australian national anthem. Attempts to make *Advance Australia Fair* such an anthem have never met with any success. Nor is our flag wholly Australian; it is the Union Jack combined with the stars of the Southern Cross. Not even our legislature is solely Australian, requiring as it does the constitutional approval of the Crown for all its acts. All these loyalties, traditions and sentiments are dual: no one would have them otherwise.

But in the badge of the services there is none of this duality. It is, to those who wear it, implicit with the sense of being essentially Australian; of being Australians who are representing their country overseas. It is, to them, what the Cockade is to the Gloucesters, the Castle to the Norfolks, the Leek to the Welsh Guards. In the bronze badge that depicts a fierce sun they see their own outback: in the bayonet points which form its rays they see the story of Gallipoli. It is the quintessence of the Anzac tradition, of being a "Digger," of fighting for the homeland—Australia.

Yet in 1946 the services disintegrated almost overnight. Most especially did the Army vanish into the thinnest of thin air. The war was over: no ordinary Australian could be induced any longer to contemplate the stupidities of army life in its absence. No amount of pay, or promises of comfortable quarters and gentlemanly sergeant-majors, could overcome the individual's atavistic dislike of a life of mass regulations and mob activity. Until the next war the Army, if it wished to survive, had to seek its life blood elsewhere, and Englishmen were lured

## *The Australian Serviceman*

into our Forces. Whether their attitude towards things military will change ours, or whether our attitude will change theirs, remains to be seen. The question became an academic one on the outbreak in 1950 of yet another war.

Promptly at that time the Navy steamed off to Korean waters, the R.A.A.F. flew to Japan, the Army hurriedly enlisted volunteers. Soon the 1st Battalion marched through Sydney, waving cheerfully to anyone who caught their eye among the spectators (a regimental liberty which startled English audiences who witnessed the episode on newsreels) and embarked for service in Korea.

They wore their Digger hats, shouted comments about the beer they were leaving behind and the beer they hoped to find, and refrained scrupulously from saluting their officers. They sailed out of the harbour singing the "Maoris' Farewell" which is the soldiers' traditional song of departure from Australia. In other words, they clung tenaciously to the old tradition; self-consciously perhaps, but determinedly never the less.

Each man clings to this tradition. His picture as an individual is now clear. He is a soldier whose uniform is the open-necked shirt, shorts, long socks and boots, and on his head the famous bush hat. Tunics have no appeal, unless to keep him warm in Korean winters. Gleaming buttons interest him not at all. Polished belts are not for him. All these he admires on the brilliant regiments of the British Army, admires fervently on others, but has no desire at all to emulate himself.

So he squats, rifle between his bare knees, gaiters loose around his boots, slouch hat on the back of his head. More likely than not he will shout: "Throw us the makings, mate," and a sad-faced companion will toss him a battered tin.

Slowly, skilfully, he will roll himself a cigarette, rolling it with only one hand, lifting the paper to his lips to lick it and then sticking it down. Then he will light up, inhale deeply and throw back the tin with a casual "Ta."

There, a cigarette in the corner of his mouth, is your Australian soldier.



## THE PEOPLE II

---

*Although the women of Australia played an important part in the war effort, they are more appropriately considered in a peaceful setting. Their contribution to the national character is made essentially on the home front—using the word “home” in its warmest, most personal sense.*

*Judy Fallon’s evaluation of her countrywomen may come as a surprise to some, for she stakes no claim on their behalf to careers and intellectual achievement. These she chooses to regard as base metals. The gold of a woman’s life, she feels, is something very different.*

*Mrs. Fallon was a journalist in Sydney until she went to live for a year in New Caledonia—the setting of her unconventional travel book, Pacific Pantomime. More recently, she has been writing in London. If her own successful career seems to belie some of her theories, we must grant her a woman’s privilege of charming inconsistency.*

# *The Australian Woman*

JUDY FALLON

MEMORIES OF "the pioneer woman" linger in the Australian mind, setting an impossible standard of courage, resource, humour and independence. Following in her giant footsteps, and striving to emulate her deeds and attitudes, are some four million Australian women, each one of whom is happily confident that she conforms to this mythical type, yet sure she has an individuality all her own.

Irrationally perhaps (for the pioneer woman is generally no direct kin of hers, and these are not pioneering days), and often only subconsciously, the modern Australian woman plays the same part that her pioneering forerunner played in the early nineteenth century. It is the role customarily allotted to her by man—comforter, domestic drudge, patient listener; together with that allotted to her by nature—mother of the family; and modified, in the particular circumstances, to include the roles of helpmate when labour is scarce, guardian of morality where clergy are absent, and source of tradition while history books are unwritten.

Along with special obligations go special rewards. The modern Australian woman, no less than the pioneer, has the advantage of being admitted to masculine comradeship on non-sexual terms, while still being protected (as the pioneer woman needed to be) by a seeming excess of masculine chivalry. The Australian man, rough tongued though he is, will not swear in the hearing of the opposite sex, nor tell a smutty story. He is a hard drinker, but naïvely shocked by the sight of a drunken woman. He is a tough individualist, but surrenders his seat in a crowded bus even to a schoolgirl.

The speed of Australia's physical transition from primitive outpost to urban civilisation has been such that the habits of its people have not always kept pace. Or so it seems when one considers the part that women play. To those emancipated women of older nations who may deplore this state of affairs I can say that they need not waste their sympathy, for the typical Australian woman does not regret her "pioneer" status. She has been given the vote, and asks her husband how to cast it. She

## *The Australian Woman*

has, you see, a husband. And children. And a home. And around these her life is built, comfortable, secure and richly rewarding.

The way of life that was laid down for her by the pioneer woman is in no way "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined": it actually gives her a far wider field of influence than is open to many English wives, shut out from three-quarters of their husbands' lives by an artificial barrier which forbids the discussion of business matters between male and female as something only a shade less than obscene.

The first settlers in Australia could not keep separate the tasks of man and woman, for each had to be ready, in an emergency, either to share or take over the other's work. This mutual dependence placed a great responsibility on the woman's shoulders, and the pioneer woman bore it magnificently. She worked alongside her man, and together they wrested a begrudged livelihood from the bushland, where each civilised comfort had to be carved out of an inimical wilderness.

Husbands and wives working together on the land are common enough in any farming community, but the very loneliness of each Australian property, with neighbours often no closer than fifty miles, meant a different pattern of mutual dependence between man and woman. It was not a question of women helping men. It was one woman, and one man, sharing every aspect of their life so that there could be no boundaries marking off male and female territory.

Because it was a primitive existence the men naturally assumed dominance, yet because the women shared the responsibility and the work, their part was not secondary but complementary.

That pattern still remains, but while the Australian woman expects, and is expected to share in every phase of her man's life, she does not dominate it as does another descendant of pioneers, the modern American woman. ("Give her time," whispers the male critic, but I am writing of the present, not the future.) The Australian "Mum" is a very different matriarch from the American "Mom." She shows no desire to play a man's part, because she knows she is far better off playing a woman's. She is the hub of her own particular world, and she has no wish to be the spokes, the wheels, and the whole painted wagon.

The Australian "Mum" is indeed the pivotal point of the Australian home, but metaphorically she rarely steps beyond the threshold. It is the custom for the family to go home and "ask Mum," rather than for her to step out into the world and tell them.

In direct contrast to the "Mom" worship in contemporary American writing, is the "Mum" baiting that one finds in Australian writing.



## *The People*

"Mum" is ridiculed in cartoons and radio programmes, and countless stories, parlour and otherwise, make high (and low) fun of her. In *On Our Selection*, the nearest thing that Australia has to a folk play, the type is crystallised. "Mum" is plump, and more than a little ridiculous, but she is the one who stands firm in moments of crisis, she is the one who resolves all problems while endlessly brewing cups of tea.

In Russell Braddon's *The Naked Island* there is a recent example of it, when he tells of receiving his first letter in a prisoner-of-war camp:

"Mine came from my sister. It said: 'Dear Russ, Mum's puddings are still as lumpy as ever. Oodles of love from us all. Pat.' I read it over and over. If twenty-five words were all the Japanese would allow our folk to write, then that letter told me all I wanted to know—that the family did not accept that I was 'killed' as posted: that the old household jokes about my mother's rather abandoned cooking still flourished: that home was still home."

This is a purely Australian method of deduction. No one else would assume that all was well at home because their mother's puddings were still lumpy, and certainly no one else but an Australian "Mum" would be unperturbed by a devoted son calling her "a lousy cook," even in a best-seller. But Russell Braddon's mother, and every other Australian "Mum," is quite unruffled by this. "Mum" knows her inarticulate Australian male, and his habit of disguising deep emotion under a layer of affectionate abuse.

The Australian woman is so used to being regarded in terms of easy comradeship and partnership (the strictly Australian use of the word "mate" involves all of that, and more), that it comes as a shock to her to discover the same relationships do not exist everywhere in the world. I read with astonishment an article in a London daily newspaper by a leading woman journalist, in which she deplored what she called a "modern" habit of expecting the husband to help with the washing-up and other domestic chores.

"After all," she wrote, "if your husband rang you from his office and asked you to come in and help him finish his work, you would regard this as monstrous."

It is *her* statement I regard as monstrous, and so would any Australian woman. A request of that kind, if it were not so ordinary as to escape comment altogether, would be regarded as a great compliment. "Love me, love my job," is the slogan of the average Australian man, and along with the other female lore that a girl absorbs as she grows up is an ability to listen intelligently to masculine "shop" talk. That men will talk over

## *The Australian Woman*

the problems and worries of their particular work with their wives first of all, and that they will seek and take advice from them, does not mean that "Mum" is merging into "Mom."

Australia has, thank goodness, yet to produce a Hetty Green, and the woman's influence in the business world is usually that of a behind-the-scenes partner. "Mum" does not have to tie her apron strings in a strangling knot around the necks of her husband and children, and if she tried she would meet with scant success.

The individuality and independence which are regarded as their birthright by all Australians were learnt by the first Australian-born children at their English mothers' knees. In her busy, task-filled day, the pioneer woman had no time to supervise her children, nor was there anyone to whom she could delegate their care.

She had to teach those children to be self-reliant and independent at an early age, so that they could walk warily but courageously in a land where danger stalked between the gum trees, and lurked in the tangle of scrub and bracken. Most of all, she had to teach them to act swiftly and efficiently as she did when accidents happened in their little world so remote from the other little worlds scattered throughout the wide, lonely land in which she had made them a home.

Australian children of to-day enjoy the freedom and early maturity which circumstances forced upon their forebears, but their mothers take care that, while children are seen and undoubtedly heard, there is no question of their shouting down the grown-ups.

The family group follows closely the basic English pattern of last century, but the Australian home, which is very much the centre of the family group, is as modern as it is possible to make it. Apart from the very few colonial stone houses and buildings, most Australian architecture is strictly twentieth century, and while there is a certain amount of neo-everything from Tudor to M.G.M., the better designed homes and buildings have the clean, straight lines and enormous window space of the Corbusier-Lloyd Wright school.

Terrace houses exist only in slum areas, the relics of early English-directed, speculative building; the "semi-detached" is practically unknown; and the typical Australian house is set in its own square of garden, however small. When I remarked on this to an Englishwoman, she said, "Are Australian houses all separate from one another? How very untidy."

Untidy, perhaps, but it does not mean that while each house enjoys a privacy from the next, there is no need to guard that privacy jealously

## *The People*

as one does in overcrowded Europe. The Australian woman loves her home, and seeks to make even the smallest furnished flat a reflection of her own personality, but she also loves entertaining and the front door is, very often literally, never closed. There is no question of a woman being "at home" on Thursdays. An Australian woman is at home seven days a week, and practically twenty-four hours a day.

This gregariousness is a twentieth-century reflection of the days when a guest at the remote homestead was a joyful occurrence, and when it meant killing if not the fatted calf, then certainly the least lean lamb. In similar circumstances, hospitality has become enshrined as the highest virtue among the nomad peoples of the African and Asian deserts. So it was with the Australian pioneers, and one can only hope that women will continue to maintain this tradition, even though city life—with hotels and restaurants—means that hospitality is no longer a matter of life and death.

The constant stream of guests in the average home involves an incredible amount of work for the hostess, for there has never been, as there has in England, a pool of domestic labour with its own tradition of service, nor as in the United States a group of coloured people who must accept a subordinate status.

The Australian woman is proud of her home, and she has to be capable of doing all the work required to keep it clean and attractive. Fortunately for her it is generally built on one level, with no stairs, and it has modern plumbing, a hot-water service, and a shining kitchen. The climate makes a refrigerator a necessity, and the post-war boom has also brought dish and clothes washing machines. With the wife doing all the household work, including the laundry, it is natural that a large part of the domestic budget is spent on labour-saving equipment.

Even in extremely well-to-do homes the dinner is generally cooked, served and cleared away by the hostess, but it is not unusual (or "bad form") for guests to help with the washing-up.

I well remember attending an elaborate supper party in Sydney, at which Sir Malcolm Sargent was the guest of honour. Our hostess was the wife of a very wealthy man, and that night she was resplendent in brocade and diamonds. After supper, I was standing talking to her when she glanced into the dining-room and noted that the guests had all moved into the reception room.

"Excuse me, my dear," said my seventy-year-old hostess, and with an expert kick that sent her train fanning out behind her, she walked majestically into the dining-room. There I saw her carefully collecting

## *The Australian Woman*

the crystal goblets from which the forty guests had drunk. When I went to help her, she waved me aside. "I always wash these myself," she said, as she set off for the pantry with a huge silver tray, filled with glasses, in her resolute old hands.

Odd jobs of carpentry, painting, and repairs to electrical gadgets are all in the day's work, and no Australian woman will live in a house that is unattractive or uncomfortable if her own ingenuity and capability can change it. There is, however, one department of household management where she fails miserably and this is cooking.

The abundance of meat and fresh vegetables have meant that she has never needed to take pains to provide a nourishing meal for her family. The incredible outback breakfast of porridge, steak, eggs, bacon, chips, tomatoes and toast, washed down by scalding draughts of black tea, is praiseworthy only for its ingredients, and not for its preparation.

I suppose the two supremely Australian dishes are kangaroo-tail soup (no more exciting than any thick meat soup) and damper (an unleavened, and unappetising bread). But there is one Australian dish which excites me, and that is a lamb chop, grilled to black perfection by being spitted on a green gum tree twig and held over an open fire sprinkled with gum leaves.

The faintest whiff of acrid eucalyptus smoke, and I am back again—a youngster with salt-stiff pigtails and a sun-peeled nose, squatting like a salamander on a hot rock, and clutching a charcoal-encrusted chop in sandy fingers. The accidental ingredients of salt water and sand give a taste and texture to this picnic dish which I fear the jaded European palate could never appreciate, but to an Australian it is the ultimate gastronomic delight.

I am, however, forced to admit that the average Australian woman is, as Russell Braddon has so gracelessly remarked, "a lousy cook." Here, for once, we can blame the legend instead of praising it. Just as the pioneer woman's qualities of courage and fortitude were staunchly British, so unfortunately was her cooking. Nor have matters been helped by the Australian man who insists that his soup should be spiked with Worcestershire sauce, his meat swamped by tomato ketchup and, his sweets submerged in custard.

The picture I have painted of the Australian woman as a hard-working, earnest housewife, without a thought beyond her home and husband, is by no means complete.

There are two factors in Australian life which seem to be inseparably

## *The People*

linked, and these are sunshine and laughter. They both have a great bearing on the way the Australian woman looks: the sun has stolen the pink and white complexion she should have inherited from her English ancestors, and helped by laughter has engraved deep lines on her cheeks and round her eyes. Her face is always tanned, from her habit of going hatless in the blazing heat and from lying for hours on beaches in a state of sun-drenched nirvana.

She is far less concerned about these lines than an Englishwoman would be, for even on a young face you will see the deep channels of sun and laughter. Australians love to laugh, and to laugh loudly. No one has ever told them it is vulgar, and the first thing a stranger notices about any gathering is the uninhibited brouhaha of a laughter-loving people. The noise we make is unremarked in our own country, but in the dim, religious atmosphere of a London restaurant, a table of Australian women can sound like a machine-gun in action.

It surprises an Australian woman to find that her habit of laughing loudly and joyfully is not regarded in England with the same approval as it is in her homeland. I have still to recover from hearing my English uncle say to me, "My dear child, will you please not *laugh* in Cheltenham."

A sense of humour is essential, and this does not mean simply a talent to amuse. It means the ability to remain good-humoured while being subjected to the bombardment of raillery which is a sure sign of Australian affection. A woman must take her fair share of this, and laugh quite as freely and loudly as the men.

While a great amount of this teasing is directed at her looks and clothes, this does not mean that the Australian man is unappreciative. He is immensely proud of her, and delighted if she attracts admiring glances when he takes her out. He would never dream of saying, "That hat makes you look conspicuous," though he might say, "It makes you look like an old crow," and expect her to treat the remark as a compliment. He loves her to dress up for an occasion, providing always that she does not expect him to do the same.

She is quick to adopt a new fashion, but prefers to have her clothes made to order (or to make them herself) rather than to buy them ready-made. Partly that is because she enjoys adapting styles to her own personality; and partly because the economics of a small country have not allowed the development of wholesale dress houses on the English and American scale. A well-dressed Australian woman can hold her own in any world capital, although she shares with the American woman

## *The Australian Woman*

a preference for bright colours which occasionally alarms the conservative English eye.

The fashion scene is dominated by French influence in high fashion and American influence in sports clothes. As yet, there is nothing typically Australian. The women's magazines have correspondents in Paris, New York, and Hollywood; and their news of style changes brings a quick response as women hurry to their "little dressmakers around the corner." These little dressmakers have flourished in the absence of mass-produced wholesale clothes, and their work is as good as any outside France.

Because of the long summer the Australian woman loves gay fabrics, flowered hats and brightly-coloured sandals. She is particularly fond of elaborate evening and cocktail dresses, and wears them whenever she has the slightest excuse. Who will blame her if occasionally the excuse seems too slight? Her sports clothes, however, are never wrong. They are always practical as well as pretty, for the Australian man has no time for a woman who cannot play the part (at golf, tennis, or whatever game it is) as well as look it.

The whole fashion picture bears out the fact that Australian women dress to please their men and not, as in many countries to annoy other women.

Most Australian girls contemplate taking a job after leaving school, but "Home versus career" is rarely a vexed question. Home is the preference almost every time. If she embarks on a career, she is treated with an easy and informal courtesy, for since she is in the minority men do not regard her as a rival. Her way up the ladder is made easy by their helping rather than hindering. Chivalry, perhaps mistakenly, extends into business relations and prescribes that dog does not eat female dog.

By far the most successful career-woman I have known was the highly-paid editor of an Australian national weekly, who had climbed to the top of her professional tree and brought up her two children at the same time. The children were almost grown-up when I met her, and she was as affectionately voluble about them as any other "Mum" would be. At the finish of a busy day in the office she would hurry home to cook dinner for them and her husband, and there was never any question (indeed very little possibility) of her home being run by servants.

Although her position in the office was sufficiently high-powered for her to refuse to lift a telephone for herself, she would nevertheless submit to being routed out of bed at midnight or later by her children. Clad in a housecoat like any suburban housewife, she would then set

## *The People*

about cutting sandwiches and making tea for a gaggle of teen-agers.

Next morning in the office she would be her old imperious self, although her motherly traits always came to the fore when any of "her girls" were sick or unhappy. The two sides of her life never seemed to clash, and she made the transition from one to the other as simply as changing a dress.

This again is in the pioneer tradition, for the country woman has always had to take over the farm or station if the man died or went to war. The city woman running a career and a home, with ease as well as elegance, is only doing what country women have done for generations. If, however, she decides that she does not want a career, she is not regarded as giving up her birthright for a mess of domestic duties.

On marriage, the Australian woman usually retires with joy from her job or career, a retirement expected by the community which has fixed the minimum legal wage at the amount needed by a man with a wife and three children to keep. Normally children do not leave home until they marry, and a daughter with a job is still kept by her father, although she may be expected to buy her own clothes. A son may contribute to the family budget, but this is to teach him the masculine obligation of supporting others with his earnings, and more often than not "Mum" saves his contributions to hand to him as an unexpected nest-egg when he marries.

It is on the family unit, supported by the husband and father's earnings, that the whole Australian social structure rests, and that it is such a strong unit is due in large part to the efforts of one extraordinary and dedicated pioneer woman—Caroline Chisholm. It was her vision, and her relentless pursuit of that vision, which lifted the penal settlement of New South Wales out of its moral torpor and set it on the path to freedom and dignity.

When she arrived in the colony with her husband in 1838, she found that hundreds of young girls were wandering homeless through the streets of Sydney. The Government encouraged them to migrate, but made no provision for them when they landed. Mrs. Chisholm gently but ruthlessly persisted until she had an interview with the Governor, Sir George Gipps, who later reported that she spoke to him "as if her reason, and experience too, were worth as much as mine." The good man's astonishment did not prevent Caroline Chisholm from extracting a promise that he would provide a shelter for the homeless women.

Hopelessly inadequate and rat-ridden though the shelter was, Mrs. Chisholm shared it with her charges. She travelled with them, too, on

*(Opposite) SIR DONALD BRADMAN'S 100th run of his 100th century in first-class cricket, made against the Indians at Sydney*

## *The Australian Woman*

horseback or on the tops of loaded drays, on journeys which were fantastically long for those days, and she saw them established on farms "of good repute."

That was not enough for her, and although her health had nearly broken down, she undertook the long voyage back to England after she had learned that many migrants had left their children behind in the workhouses. There she badgered public figures, and impressed the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Earl Grey, with her vivid phrase: "For all the clergy you can appoint, all the churches you can build, and all the books you can export, you will never do much good without what a gentleman in that colony calls 'God's police'—women and little children."

Her fight took seven years but, eventually she won her way, and then shipload after shipload of "God's police" went to Australia. Mrs. Chisholm was personally responsible for settling 11,000 people in the colony of New South Wales. Despite this achievement, she remained within the womanly frame of the pioneer legend. Eleanor Dark writes of her: "She never deviated an inch from the essentially feminine method and approach. She looked to the completed structure of the nation, but was content to lay its foundations faithfully, man by man, woman by woman, child by child, seeing in the united family the nucleus, the essential life-cell of progress."

But a woman who followed Mrs. Chisholm to-day might not have the approval of her fellow women—not if she left her husband and children for a long period to pursue a career, however much it was dedicated to the public good. The Australian woman is apt to regard one of her sex who enters politics as being, at best, vaguely eccentric, if not completely irresponsible.

Statements by feminists and women politicians are usually treated with scorn by other Australian women. As a junior reporter, I remember hurrying back to my newspaper office with a highly controversial statement by a leading feminist, who happened to be childless. "How many children has she had?" asked my editor, a forthright spinster. "The idea of a childless woman talking about education!" And the story was viciously skewered on the "Use only if desperate" spike.

One of the few women politicians who has ever gained the approval of other women is Dame Enid Lyons, wife of a Prime Minister, who was elected to his seat after his death—partly because she was his widow, but mainly because she was the mother of his eleven children. In the House, she spoke as a mother and a housewife, not as a politician, and her



## *The People*

criticisms of the national budget were contained in parables of household economy. On one occasion she lectured members on the desirability of making soup from left-over bones.

In general, the Australian women can only understand one of her sex going into politics if she has no husband or, worse still, if she has a bored one. In either case she is to be pitied, rather than envied or admired, and the measure of her worth is always whether she is a good wife and mother.

A career in the arts is less suspect, perhaps because it conflicts less obviously with the usual womanly duties. It has been said, with more truth than tact, that "Australia breeds sopranos like sheep"—a statement worthy of the sweet-voiced but acid-tongued Melba herself. Among our poets, the contemporary lyricist Judith Wright has a special and honourable place, and a delicate and womanly fire shines through the crystal purity of her style. For her, the romance of life is not in the love of a woman for a man, but in the love of a woman for her children.

It seems significant to me that Judith Wright is young, and her poetry appeals to young readers. I hope that means the Australian woman is not changing, that she feels well cast in the part which the pioneer woman first played.

Perhaps the role is a little unsophisticated by European standards, which is easy to comprehend for in a pioneer community the social pattern is reduced to the simplest form. Yet simplicity can reveal truth, and I feel it has shown in Australia the true place of a woman in society. If that is so, the Australian woman has a status as valid in the twentieth century as it was in the nineteenth—and as it will be in the twenty-first.

## THE PEOPLE III

---

*The men and women who inhabit the Australian continent have developed, though not perhaps perfected, a way of life which they feel has a quality of its own, a quality to be defended if necessary by force, and certainly by argument. Essentially, they feel it is "a good life," with the emphasis on such things as health, food, sunshine—simple enough ingredients, but nourishing. If the recipe needs something more, perhaps it is only a pinch of salt.*

*George H. Johnston, who discusses aspects of the way of life, has gained perspective from world travel as a correspondent for Time magazine and various Australian newspapers. With his wife, Charmian Clift, he has written two highly successful novels with unexpected settings: High Valley (set in contemporary Tibet) and The Big Chariot (set in seventeenth-century China).*

# *Their Way of Life*

GEORGE H. JOHNSTON

THERE IS a perfectly true story told of a New Zealand stock and station agent making his first visit to the hinterland of Australia. Late one afternoon he drove up to a dusty outback settlement in the extreme west of New South Wales, came to the solitary slab and corrugated iron hotel, and inquired if he could have supper.

The landlord's wife, a taciturn sunburnt woman in a clean apron, gestured him into a wallpapered dining-room, where a horde of dead flies hung on twists of treacled paper. Three drovers, a shearer and a stock inspector, having already completed their meal at the plain deal table, were crouched over big mugs of hot tea. They looked up suspiciously and grunted noncommittal greetings. The New Zealander sat down near the door and the woman stood over him truculently. "There's nothin' but corned beef," she said, daring him to quibble.

"Thanks, that would be fine," he said gratefully.

The woman went to an open serving-hatch and called through it to her unseen husband: "Beef, one!" She stood with her elbow on the shelf surveying the newcomer impassively, finally brought over to him three thick slabs of dry-looking, bright red beef on a cracked plate.

The New Zealander studied the plate for a moment or two, then smiled up at the woman timidly. "Vegetables?" he suggested.

She shook her head firmly.

"Perhaps a bit of potato, then?"

"Ain't you 'card we've 'ad a drought?" she said scornfully.

"Well, it doesn't matter," said the New Zealander hastily, once more glancing down uneasily at the dry hunks of meat. "Maybe I could have some pickles?"

For an embarrassingly long time the woman studied him contemptuously, then sauntered across to the open hatch and propped her elbow on the shelf. "Chow-chow, boss," she called, and feeling some explanation was necessary, added, "Bastard 'ere thinks it's Christmas!"

There is a strong element of parable in this story. It is the story of

## *Their Way Of Life*

Australian's remoteness, of its surface uncouthness, of the defensive mechanism that conceals its hospitality, of the quick, rude arrogance which long experience has proved the most effective technique for transferring to the other person one's own latent feeling of inferiority, of that sharp-edged sense of humour which often to the stranger has the ring of cruelty and an irony that is unfriendly and contemptuous.

Nearly a million new settlers who since the end of the war have come from all parts of the world to live in Australia will have nearly a million such stories, each differing in detail and setting and characterisation, all essentially the same.

On the crowded safety-zone at a Sydney tram stop a mild-faced migrant from Prague stammers in broken English to ask an Australian if the approaching tram goes to Bellevue Hill. "Why don't you learn to speak English!" snarls the Australian impatiently, jumps aboard the tram and leaves the bewildered Czech wondering whatever possessed him to leave Europe.

The sequel, inevitable and unchanging, is conveyed in the picture of a disgruntled Australian complaining that the European migrants "stick together" and refuse to mix with the locals or to learn the habits and usages of the so-called "Australian way of life."

These human stories are unfortunate, and even chronic, ravages on the publicly presented face of the southern dominion—the ravages, doubtless, will be repaired in time, and by time—and are generally excused by the statement that Australia's few great cities are both overpopulated and "over-Americanised," and that the *real* Australia is not to be found in the cities; nor for that matter, the *real* Australian.

This argument presents a continent where about five million of its eight and three-quarter million people are disregarded so that a legendary, half-symbolic, sun-tanned, adventurous figure may emerge against a background of billabongs, coolibah trees, salt-pans, sheep on a dry hillside, great herds of cattle droving dustily across eroded plains, and blue smoke hanging in a bluer sky above the shearing sheds. Add kangaroos and koalas, wide white beaches and surf boats tossing on the swing of the Pacific breakers, and that ubiquitous and apparently unending sequence of attractive sun-tanned girls in white satin swimsuits and you have the half-factual, half-mythical picture of the *real* Australia.

It is the picture presented in the tourist handbooks, and it is as true as the tourist handbooks which portray Rome in pictures of St. Peter's and the Arch of Vespasian but take no account of the scrofulous cats fighting and spitting in the smelly shadows of the Pantheon. It is,

## *The People*

generally speaking, true also as the picture of the *real* Australia which the swift-moving tourist may acquire. Lastly, it is the picture which the average Australian desperately—and alas! in moments of cold inward vision, hopelessly—wishes to be true.

The fact remains that to most of the country's inhabitants, Australia is anything but an eternal playground for sun-lovers, or, alternatively, some milder equivalent of America's romantic Wild West. Four out of every five Australians live an urban life which, with the exception of climatic variations and a background of different birds and trees, is not greatly to be distinguished from the urban forms of life practised by millions of other people in other countries.

This crust of urban society extends thinly and for great distances around the twelve thousand miles of Australia's coastline—a disconcertingly brittle pastry, a piccrust of sophistication, which holds in and preserves the essential legend. It is dangerously easy for the visitor to fall for the legend. It is sadder and sociologically more important that the average Australian spends a great deal of time trying to convince himself that it is true.

It is all very well for the Australian to want himself represented as a casual, independent-minded swashbuckler; as the simple, endearing representative of a bucolic but adventurous society. History and the outer world have an unsettling habit of interpreting places, nations and races by other than the self-selected standards. It is interesting to know the whereabouts of the farm where Virgil lived his youth; but Cisalpine Gaul is forgotten and Roman civilisation remembered in terms of Rome itself, the eternal *city*. Posterity's memory is largely an urban memory, and even in the days of Pax Romana, Rome was known by its Romans and not by its colonists. Ancient Greece was primarily a rural civilisation, but to-day the life of the simple peasants in Euboea or the Plains of Thessaly is lost and ancient Greece is crystallised in the remembrance of the city-state of Athens.

The same thing is true to-day. The United States of America is a country of vast prairies and forests and of a gigantic agricultural industry. Yet the U.S.A. remains firmly fixed in the mind of the outer world as a metropolitan civilisation.

It is worth noting that film producers, to whom formula is an old god, will not even consider shooting anything about Australia that is not packed with gum trees, dust, blackfellows, men with lean sunburnt faces and hordes of cattle (sheep or even kangaroos can sometimes be substituted). These films are generally quite unrecognisable even to the

## *Their Way of Life*

most self-deluded Australians, but they perpetuate the legend that the Australian way of life has the freedom of a wide, brown land. The truth is that, for most Australians, their life is constricted by the narrow, grey cities.

Many hundreds of miles stretch between Brisbane and Adelaide or Melbourne and Perth. Those distances span a fairly considerable geographical change and at times a measurable climatic change; they represent no appreciable difference in national character or way of life. The Brisbane suburban bungalow may be raised upon stilts to protect it from ants, but in essence it is the same sort of suburban house as the one settling snugly into its earthy foundations in Melbourne or Perth. Brisbane people may appear more easy-going and those of Perth more friendly than the inhabitants of Melbourne (who may be regarded as a little on the "starchy" side) or of Sydney (who are presumed to be raucously American). The differences, however, are essentially superficial and arise from nothing more significant than climate which keys the working pace to different tempos.

In the urban world of the southern continent the Australian can generally move from one place to another without noticing it. Australian comparisons between cities are almost always pegged to the respective qualities of the beer and, in lesser degree to the respective laws governing the drinking of it.

It is even common for the traveller to base many of his impressions of Australia and Australians on the same comparative aspect. The average Englishman, accustomed to his friendly and civilised inns and pubs, possesses an almost pathological interest in the riotous wildness of Australian drinking. While there is much about Australian drinking which cannot be defended—and, indeed, often can scarcely be explained—it again becomes a misrepresentation if the beer-swilling spectacle visible in any Sydney pub ten minutes before closing time is put forward as a true or even partly true picture of the Australian way of life.

In seeking the average, one has constantly to fight against this surface misrepresentation. It applies to the legendary figure of the sunburnt drover, to the swaggering and undisciplined fighting man, to the congenital drunk fighting like a sabre-toothed tiger for one more "schooner" before closing time, to the hard-eyed man whose daily orbit is endlessly circumscribed by horse-racing and football matches, to the truculent rudeness of the man in the street.

The average Australian is no more truly represented by these endlessly gyrating and grimacing puppets than the average man of any other

## *The People*

country is represented by the more public of his caricatures. No one would suggest that the young American receives precise portrayal in the picture of Mickey Rooney, or that the behaviour of the more mature American is revealed by the antics of Tommy Manville. Nor would one look for the average Londoner among the Mayfair "wooflers" with their bowler hats, striped trousers, furred umbrellas, and almost inarticulate affectations.

In other words, scratch the surface of this Australian who is to a large degree the victim of his own self-parody and you almost invariably find a person who is not substantially different from anybody else. He is moved by much the same impulses as any other average man and surrounded by much the same sort of pressures which will shape both his life and his conduct this way and that. He can be measured off in strips of goodness and badness, weakness and strength, running at about the same proportion as in any other person living amid the conflicts and diversions of an urban society.

His surroundings naturally possess differences which create a dissimilar exterior shape even if the interior structure remains the same. His city lacks the squareness, drabness and majesty of London; or the glass-and-concrete pinnacked quality of New York. But it lies somewhere between the two and that is its charm. He is subject in a given year to three times as much rain as ever falls on London in the same period, but with an Australian exuberance he gets this over in great gulps so that he has time to enjoy twenty times the amount of sunshine. He suffers natural disasters, but they are generally in a minor key.

He is aware of belonging to a metropolitan society and largely unaware—except when annual Agricultural Shows bring their brimming rural cornucopias to the cities—that the concrete plinth of every single one of his city edifices rests in the dung and soft soil of a pastoral economy.

In the year of a good wool-clip he may brood pleasurably on this sheet anchor to his national prosperity, but less in terms of sheep-runs or shearing-sheds than the number of Buicks in the streets.

Concerning the aspects of life which immediately surround him, there is a glib formula by which he explains and excuses the countless irritations of tangled traffic, national shortcomings, and inefficient public services—"after all, we're only a young country!"—and although he has been using this formula for far too long, it still seems to work satisfactorily most of the time. It can be used to explain away such a host of things: a simple bottle-neck so entangling the traffic of Sydney that it becomes a nightmare compared with even the worst congestion in London and

## *Their Way of Life*

New York; the anachronistic break of railway gauge which in essential transport between the nation's two greatest cities has already cost countless millions of pounds; and almost anything else from the price of beer to the laws governing the wearing of swimsuits (for sun-loving, extroverted Australia bans the bikini with a Calvinistic ferocity!).

He is, at the same time, perfectly conscious and quietly proud of the fact that his country, in spite of itself, accomplishes an enormous amount of very real progress and does it often at a headlong pace. The Snowy Mountains development scheme, in which peaks of the Australian Alps are being torn down and rivers taken from their courses, fills him with as much pride as if he himself were tearing the boulders out with his own bare hands. His pride is quieter but no less specific in his knowledge that Australia is among the world leaders in virus research, and in many other aspects of science he sees Australians pacing it with the best brains of any other country.

Were he to continue to look at his country in greater detail from this point of view he would find less excuse for his much-publicised inferiority complex than he imagines. He would find a vitality which is no longer common in a tired world.

He would see a picture of steady development and progress from pioneering days—a progress not particularly stimulated by artificial booms, nor obstructed by policies of *laissez-faire* and *manana* which could be a danger in a country where the skies are clear and the sun warm.

Progress has been pegged to the justification for it (and progress in the modern connotation of the term is not *always* justified). Commercial aviation, for example, has in this youngest and most sparsely-populated continent been developed to a greater degree than anywhere else on earth. It is true the continent is “hand-made” for aviation; the fact remains that Australia has the highest *per capita* usage of air travel in the world, and the lowest accident rate. Only in Australia do ordinary men and women “take a plane” with the easy nonchalance which one expects to see, and seldom does, among travellers by tube, train or bus. And above this Australia has developed out of its particular geographical requirements many unique employments of aviation, of which the “Flying Doctor” service and “Air Beef” operation are the best known.

There is something typical of this development, and typical also of Australia, in the fact that Qantas—one of the world's major international airlines, and the oldest British airline—had its beginnings only a generation ago with a one-plane “dust hop” between two small, fly-bitten townships in the isolated outback of western Queensland.



## *The People*

It is the same with industry.

It is not long since Big Businessmen of an older world rapped the knuckles of brash Australians for daring to consider that their country could be anything but a reliable producer of wool, wheat, meat, dairy produce and gold. Yet Australia had enormous deposits of coal and minerals, gigantic resources of iron ore. Even at that stage Australia possessed, at Newcastle, the Empire's biggest single steel plant producing the world's cheapest high-grade steel, and the world's most comprehensive plant for handling the alloys of steel. She had mountains of iron ore at Whyalla and Port Kembla, a tremendous industrial potential in Broken Hill, vast possibilities for hydro-electric development.

It was the second world war which opened the gate wide for this industrial potential; more recently it has been opened wider still by the discovery of uranium in the Northern Territory. Even before the future prospects are taken into account, the change is manifest. Australia, the great agricultural country—the vast, open land of sheep station and cattle run—is already a great industrial country.

This fact has had an all-pervading influence on the way of life. It has given much of industrial method and temperament to the average man's way of looking at things, and an industrial tinge to all political questions. In the mass development of trade unionism it was Australia which led the world—it will always be a matter of political dispute whether this, in the phrase of 1066 *And All That*, was "a good thing" or "a bad thing"—and throughout the first half of this century the Australian workman has fought with the utmost tenacity to maintain and if possible enhance the solidarity and power of organised unionism. To-day the influence of the trade unions, particularly the industrial unions, is great and there are few jobs which a man or woman may take without holding a union card.

It is fundamentally this implacable unionism which has given the Australian his "standard of living," his forty-hour working week, the adjustments of his basic wage to meet fluctuating living costs, his generally good working conditions. There are opponents of the system who feel that the working hours are too short for a nation with its stake in the future; who are emphatic that under the awesome protection of the unions there is a tendency for workers to become lazy ("Near enough is good enough" is unfortunately a saying very prevalent in Australia), for inefficiency to operate unchecked, and for safe mediocrity to be enthroned.

As in all political arguments, there is something to be said for both

## *Their Way of Life*

sides. But the trade unions are there to stay, and they have contributed, and continue to contribute, far more than the comfortable, secure and pleasant, if not opulent, Australian standard of living.

The unions have succeeded in carrying through from the free-and-easy associations of pioneering days a considerable feeling of social equality. It is difficult to find positive evidence of class distinction in Australia. The attitude of "Jack's as good as his master" has a dangerous effect when it is used not merely as an excuse, but as a positive justification for mediocrity. But it is not without reason that the Australian visiting London for the first time is struck by the class distinctions, social snobberies and astonishing servilities prevalent in everyday life.

If unionism has succeeded in creating in Australia a truer democracy of people than is evident on a national scale in Europe or the United States, it has created other things also. One of the most important is the irrational dislike of "foreigners."

This is partly an outcome of national consciousness. The Australian has deliberately defined his nationality as "Australian" rather than "British." This is valid enough, for he is as different from the Briton as the Briton is from the American. Apart from the fact that he is of slightly purer stock than the British themselves, geography ensures that his link with the country of his forefathers (and this applies to the British migrant the moment he sets foot on Australian soil) is a link of language and tradition, not of everyday life.

More importantly it comes from the residual memory of those racial fears of the "Yellow Peril," which half a century back were crystallised in the so-called "White Australia policy." Unionism has translated this old and vaguely considered race-fear into a positive and immensely strong economic fear.

It is the insularity of the Australian which makes him mistrust the strangely-dressed visitor or the man talking with a curious accent (whether the accent comes from Blackpool or Budapest doesn't matter; the mistrust is the same though the contemptuous epithet is different); but this mistrust is rarely deep-rooted. Sooner or later the stranger will be accepted on his own merits, and quite probably overwhelmed by hospitality.

But when the initial mistrust can be related to some possible threat to the tenaciously-held standard of living, it becomes a form of xenophobia so stubbornly rooted that an atom bomb would scarcely dislodge it.

Thus the White Australia policy, in its present sense, is not just a

## *The People*

prejudice against skin-pigmentation. On the whole, the Australian has little interest in, or sympathy for colour bars of any sort. For almost a century small groups of Chinese have lived contentedly in Australia, and for them the average Australian has long since developed a tolerant, amused affection.

At the same time, the Australian knows that this funny little "John Chinaman" will work much harder than he himself is normally prepared to do. He sees him toiling in his neat market-garden from before dawn until after sunset, without awareness of trade union logs or overtime rates, and it is only the smallness of the Chinese-Australian numbers that saves him from the full fury of xenophobic resentment. (That, and the high quality and low prices of his vegetables.) Were the Chinese there in sufficient strength to create an element of competition strong enough to make the Australian work harder, or for longer hours, or for lower wages, then the picture would be very different. But it is nothing to do with the colour of the other man's skin.

The Australian harbours his deepest suspicions, and reserves his fiercest resentments for two things: the refusal or the inability of the foreigner to become thoroughly assimilated into the Australian way of life; and the ever-present bogey that he will work longer, for less wages, in worse conditions.

When the foreigner proves himself a good unionist, he is accepted. The rancour that developed around Italian cane-cutters in the North Queensland sugar plantations was expressed in the hateful word "Dagos." They were accused of "sticking to themselves," "eating macaroni," and working too damned hard in a climate where no man should work hard. But the "Dagos" have been assimilated and the word lost to the glossary of Australian common usage. They are accepted as Australians; and the canefields, and Australian prosperity are the better for it.

When the wave of Hitlerian anti-semitism spread through Europe, Australia gave sanctuary to tens of thousands of Jewish refugees. It was not long before they were being called "Reffos," and a wave of what appeared to be anti-semitism spread through Australia. Generally speaking, that resentment passed once the refugees had had time to grope their way into a way of life which, by European standards, must have seemed odd and intimidating.

The biggest test of all is *now*. Since the war's end, three-quarters of a million migrants have sought a new life in Australia, an influx of population which in proportion to the indigenous population represents

## *Their Way of Life*

the greatest impact of mass migration on any nation in modern history. Although prodigious disruptions must be inevitable in the task of absorbing a wave of humanity representing one-tenth of the resident population, the fact remains that the immigration programme is working—and working for the betterment of Australia and its way of life.

This immigration has created, and will continue to create, certain virulent forms of xenophobia. It depends largely on the unions whether the disease will be allowed to run its course and peter out, as it has done in the past, or whether it will be allowed to flourish in emotional resentment and economic disruption. The average man, if the unions will let him, is willing to accept the migrant if he feels that he brings with him no threat to the standard of living and a readiness to become a "fair dinkum Aussie."

When the great Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme was launched—a Herculean project for power and irrigation which will ultimately cost £375,000,000, take a quarter of a century to finish, and divert the courses of the great rivers of southern New South Wales—it was decided to recruit engineers and workmen abroad so not to interfere with Australian housing programmes or put greater strains on the already restricted supply of skilled labour.

They came from all countries of the world—there was a Russian engineer from Siberia—and they worked together. I was with them in that first winter, in the deep snows of the Kosciuszko country on the high, cold plains. There were Jews and Christians; there were Italians, Greeks, Americans, Britons, Canadians, Danes, Germans, Russians, Swedes, South Africans, Maltese, Spaniards . . . and Australians. There was even a Cambridge graduate working as a cook in an outpost camp snowbound by a blizzard. They were all working the same hours, or any hours when the job needed it, and getting the same money; and never in my life have I seen such a *team* before, and you wouldn't have found the virus of xenophobia there had you searched for it with an electronic microscope.

They were just driving the trails through then, and putting down the first exploratory bores; and this was a job just beginning which might not be completed in their lifetime (for not all the men were young). But there was something big about it, something as big as Australia; and something belonging to the future, like Australia, too. They worked there with gigantic zest and energy, and with a wonderful, friendly teamwork; and every man there, whether Jew or Gentile, Dago or Digger, seemed to have a ravenous appetite for the future.

## *The People*

And it made me proud.

But when all this is said, the fact remains that an Australian needs only to live abroad amid the older and more settled patterns of European life, with their inflexible patterns and established values, to find a nostalgic, envious feeling for his homeland gradually and inexorably accumulating. The jostling, clanging, sweating, brash, sordid, colourful, materialistic, bombastic confusion of the growing Australia slowly comes to appear as something attractive and exciting.

And if one has children, one thinks endlessly of the sunshine drenching the walls, and the long-limbed, freckled children rolling in the surf, and one dreams of the sweeping cream slant of those beaches that stretch their scalloped miles from city to city and from coastal town to coastal town, and in contrast with this scene one dwells ruefully on the sound of a child's toy spade clanging metallically against the grey, drizzle-soaked pebbles of a Kentish beach, or sees again in well-memorised revulsion the sordid, trampled, dun-coloured confusion of Coney Island.

It is the Australian expatriate with young children who always goes home, for he it is who sees far away on the other side of Capricorn an image of long limbs and sunburnt skin, of laughter never pegged to requirements of politeness or class, of something which for all its uneasiness and confusion seems to talk of a true democracy of the spirit. He sees suddenly a promise for his own children which is dwindling, or has gone, in the older world.

And the rudeness does not seem to matter any longer, nor the liquor laws, nor the superficial immaturities, nor the vast vistas of corrugated-iron roofs and square boxes which represent Australian domestic architecture. For in the promise which he sees for his children, there is an image also of the promise of his own half-lost, half-recaptured childhood—and the fun of it, and the laughter—and the promise is still there.

## THE PEOPLE IV

---

*The child playing on the beach is father of the man playing on the cricket oval. Australia is synonymous with sport, and it is impossible to describe the way of life or the national character without describing sport and the national devotion to it. Indeed, it is impossible for most Australians to describe anything at all without lapsing into sporting similes and metaphors.*

*It would not be a true reflection of the Australian viewpoint if this subject were treated in any but the most straightforward way. Rex Rienits—formerly the sporting editor of a leading Australian newspaper, and now the commentator of the B.B.C.'s overseas weekly Sporting Newsletter—states the facts without classical allusion or pretentious soul-searching ; and J. H. Fingleton—who is both a writer and cricketer of distinction—deals with the sport which provides a very special link between Australia and Great Britain.*

*An Australian does not see sport as the subject for an elegant essay; nor is he haunted by doubts that time spent playing games may be time wasted. He likes sport and that is all there is to it. And if he likes you, he will call you "Sport." He can think of no friendlier word.*

# *Their Sports*

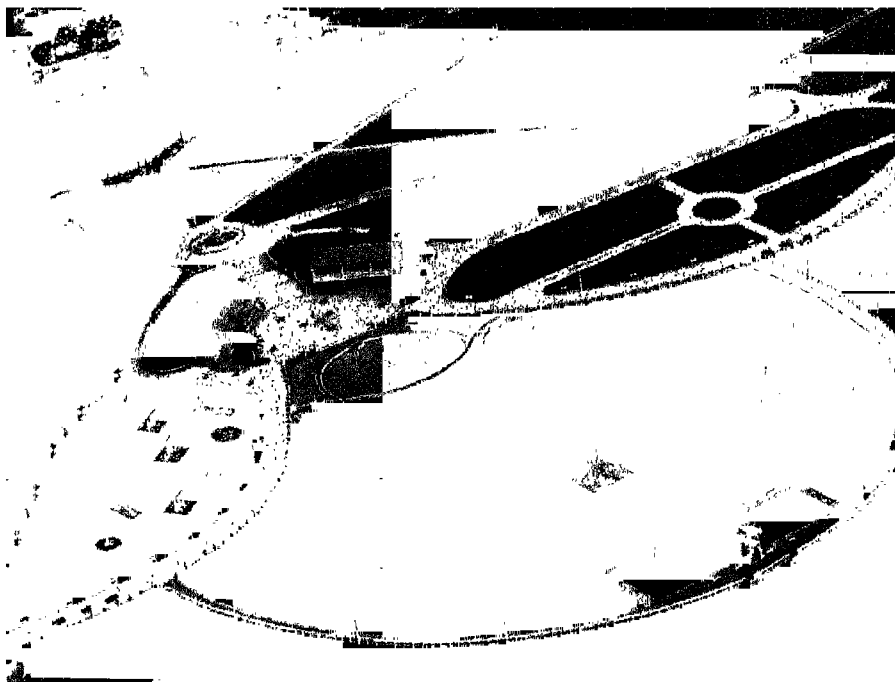
REX RIENITS

A SMALL but earnest minority regards the Australian fondness for sport as a regrettable—indeed, a deplorable—weakness in the national character; but the great majority of Australians are proud of it, proud not only that they like to play games but that they play them so well.

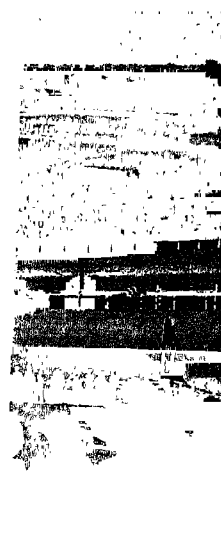
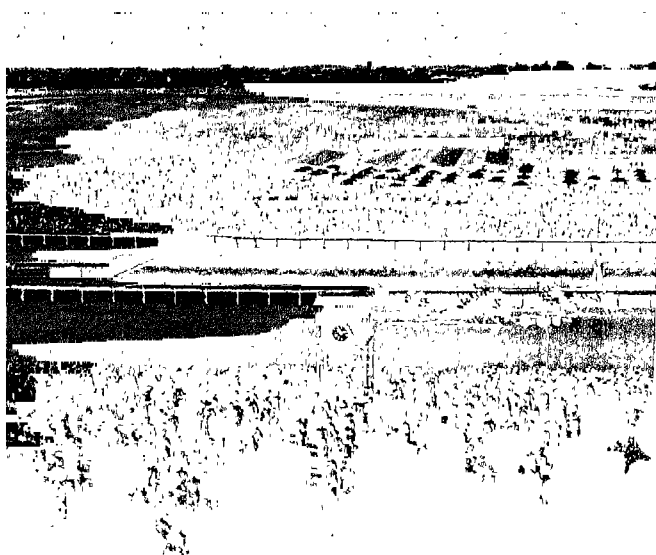
And they *do* play them well. At risk of becoming dully statistical, it seems worth quoting that of the current list of world athletics records, six are held by Australians; of the swimming list, seven. At the Olympic Games of 1952, against the sporting strength of the world, Australia won six events, and would certainly have won seven had not a young lady in her natural anxiety dropped a relay baton.

From 1934, until that fateful August day at the Oval in 1953, Australia was the undisputed champion cricket nation of the world, as she had been at various times before then and we hope will be again. Since Tests were instituted between England and Australia in 1896, Australia has won fifty-four of these matches against England's thirty-four. Her superiority over other cricket-playing countries has been even more marked. In eight years since the war she has lost only five Test matches: two each against England and South Africa, and one against the West Indies. And, of course, among a multitude of great cricketers she has produced, Australia holds a special pride in one who towers above the rest like a Nelson on his column—that incomparable run-scoring machine known affectionately as "the Don."

As in cricket, so in the more universal game of lawn tennis. In the early years of the century, Australia, combined with New Zealand as Australasia, won the Davis Cup four times; and since the two countries decided to go their separate tennis ways she has won it alone four times more. On ten other occasions she has reached the final challenge round, and against all opposition she has held the trophy since 1950. Australians have appeared many times in Wimbledon finals, and four of them—Brookes, Patterson, Crawford, and Sedgman—have won the men's singles.



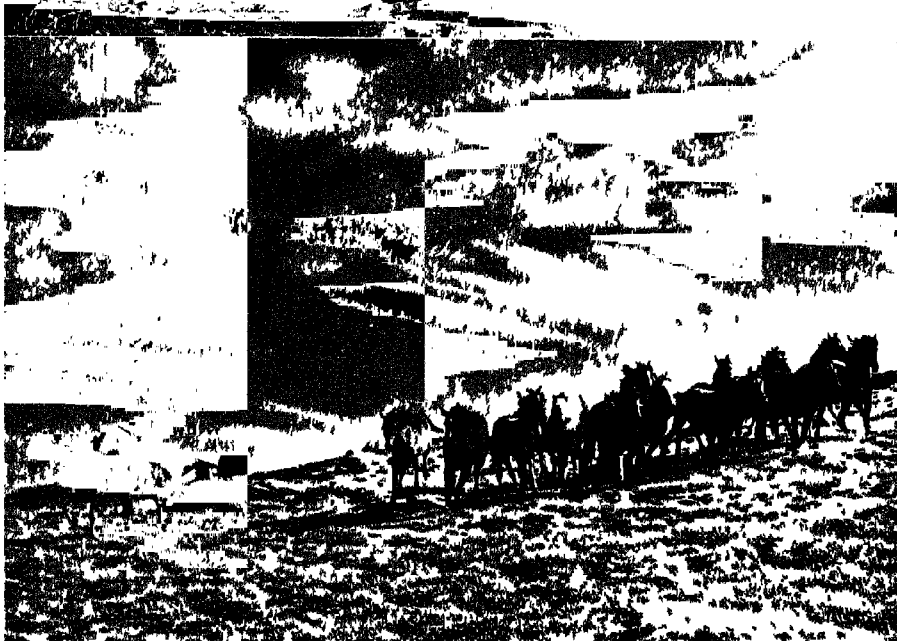
THE SHARK-PROOF OCEAN POOL above (at Geelong) and the race-track below (at Caulfield, Melbourne) are both in Victoria, but their counterparts are in every state







THE TROPIC ISLANDS of  
the Great Barrier Reef



A STOCKMAN rounds up  
wild horses—or brum-  
bies—in the outback

## *Their Sports*

To cricket and tennis must be added, for no apparent reason, sculling. In the last five Olympics, the single sculls event has been won three times by an Australian, and on a fourth occasion (1952) an Australian was second. This dominance is not confined to amateur scullers, but extends also to professionals. Since the world professional championship was introduced in 1896 there have been fourteen world champions, and seven of them have been Australians. The present champion is an Australian, and Australians have held the title uninterruptedly for the past twenty years.

Other sports in which we have achieved standards comparable with and occasionally superior to those elsewhere in the world include cycling, Rugby football, golf, motor-cycling, speedway racing, billiards, and boxing. An Australian, Jack Young, is the present world speedway champion; another, Jimmy Carruthers, is the world professional bantamweight boxing champion; another, Horace Lindrum, is the world professional snooker champion. In billiards, the monumental figure of Walter Lindrum, now retired, dwarfs all past and present rivals, and even the statisticians have lost track of his records.

This is a formidable record for a country of only eight and three-quarter million people, and obviously it has not happened by chance. There are several reasons for it, and of these perhaps the most important is the climate.

In point of fact there is so much of Australia, physically speaking, that one can find almost any climate in it from the sweltering tropics of the north to the snowfields of the south-eastern Alps. But the great bulk of the population, very sensibly, avoids living in these areas, and is to be found in the temperate regions which fringe the eastern, south-eastern and south-western seabords.

Here the summers are hot but not, as a rule, so hot as to deter those who wish to play games. The midday siesta has no part in Australian life; indeed, the mere thought of it is a subject of scorn. If you wish to drowse at noon, then you do so on a beach to the rhythm of breaking waves, or on a grassy bank lulled by the distant click of bat on ball. And every now and then you stir, to plunge into the warm, green, velvet water, or to raise yourself on one elbow and shout, "Slog him for six, Bluey!"

The winters in general are dry and sunny, crisp and invigorating, a positive invitation to get out of doors and be athletic; and the variation in the hours of daylight between summer and winter is small. It is true that in midsummer you cannot play outdoor games up to nine or

## *The People*

ten o'clock in the evening, as you can in the long English twilight. But, on the other hand, in mid-winter you are not driven indoors by darkness almost before you have digested your lunch. In fact, if you finish your day's work reasonably early, as most Australians do, you have time almost all the year round for at least an hour or so outdoors.

Again, because of the general mildness of the climate, sporting fixtures are rarely disrupted by the weather. Now and then, of course, an event may be washed out by heavy midsummer rains. But in winter you never hear of a football match being cancelled because of fog or snow.

Climate apart, Australians are encouraged to play sports rather than watch them, as facilities are so readily available. Most of the larger towns and cities are on or near the coast, and the Australian coastline is fringed with superb beaches. Some inland towns are on large rivers; others have modern swimming pools, perhaps fed from artesian wells. That is why the average Australian can swim almost as soon as he can walk; why Australia has produced so many champions at this sport; and why the fundamental racing stroke used throughout the world is still, in spite of certain refinements, the "Australian crawl."

Every hamlet, no matter how small, has its sports oval; a town of any size has probably a dozen; and the larger cities number them literally by the hundred. These sports ovals are usually owned and controlled by the local authorities, and let to any one at low rents. Their basic function is as cricket pitches in summer and football fields in winter, but most of them also do service as athletic tracks, and some as fields for sports such as hockey and lacrosse.

On New Year's Day they are invariably filled with Highland dancers and caber-tossers, and on St. Patrick's Day the chances are you will find them given over to wild-eyed, hurley-playing Ryans and O'Flanagans. Quite a number of these sports ovals are surrounded by banked tracks for cycle racing, and a great many have tennis courts and bowling greens attached.

But tennis is much more widely played than that. Most Australian houses are detached, and stand in their own ground. Very often it happens that there is enough land at the back or side of a house for a tennis court, and if so it is an even-money chance you will find one there. Most of them are hard courts, surfaced with a type of yellow clay durable in all weathers. They are cheap to instal and maintain, and in the large cities there are thousands of them. For at least nine months of the year

## *Their Sports*

the weather is mild after dark, and many of the courts are floodlit for night play.

If your preference runs to golf, it is the same story. In Sydney, a grossly overcrowded city, there are at least five first-rate golf courses within half an hour of the city's centre by bus or tram. Within an hour, there are a couple of score; and not so far beyond that again, scores more. A sizeable country town may have two or three courses, and even the smallest can usually boast one, though it may be only nine holes with sand greens.

A few of these courses, very few of them, are exclusively for members and invited friends. Many more are for members and "visitors"—a category stretched in the most elastic manner to include almost anyone who wants to play and has the green fees. But the majority are municipally controlled, and open to all, so that golf is one of the most democratic games. A club in a country town to which I once belonged had as its champion the local blacksmith, and his nearest rival was the local butcher. It is not only the character of the people which makes this possible, but also the fact that sport is inexpensive.

Except for a few specialised sports such as polo, and motor and speedboat racing, almost every form of athletic activity can be indulged in by whoever chooses to do so at a cost of a few shillings a week. There are so many golf courses and tennis courts and bowling greens and swimming pools available cheaply for the use of everyone that you don't have to belong to clubs if you don't want to. Even if you do, club fees are usually so reasonable that they are well within the financial compass of the poorest-paid office boy.

So we have three good reasons why Australians excel at most sports: the climate, the abundant facilities, and their cheapness.

A fourth reason, equally important, is that from an early age Australians are given every facility and encouragement to take part competitively in sports. Among the administrators of the various branches of sports there is a clear recognition—and there has been for many years—that although skilled coaching is essential, the best way in which anyone can realise to the full whatever talent he may have is in competition with others a little better than himself, and the tougher the competition the more effective it is bound to be.

Every school in the country sets apart at least one afternoon a week for organised sport, usually against other schools of comparable size and age-groups, so that even before they are in their teens almost every boy and girl takes part in some form of competition.

## *The People*

Children with natural ability are marked by sports masters and mistresses, and given every chance to develop their flair by exposure to stronger competition. Almost as a matter of course, when they leave school they join district clubs. These give them a chance, first of all, to show their ability in junior competitions against the youth of other districts. If they make good, they graduate through a series of minor grades to top-flight senior competition. In the larger cities, the standards in senior first-grade competitions in all sports are high. They are the testing grounds for potential internationals, and on a person's performances in these depend his ultimate selection for state or national honours.

The steadily toughening competition is undoubtedly why so many Australian athletes achieve maturity in their late teens.

In view of the intensive and highly-organised competition that exists in almost all sports in Australia, it is an odd fact, little realised elsewhere, that the great bulk of the country's competitive sport takes place on Saturday afternoons. This excludes most school sports, of course; and to some extent interstate and international events and competitions. Naturally, a great deal of individual and team training goes on during the week after working hours; but it would probably be correct to say that, for competitive purposes, ninety-five per cent of Australians are merely week-end sportsmen.

There is nothing in Australia comparable with the English County cricket system, which functions six days a week during the season. In a year in which Australia is not involved at home or abroad in a Test series against another country, almost the only first-class cricket available even to a Bradman or a Hassett or a Miller is the interstate competition for the Sheffield Shield, and that involves each competing team in a total of only eight games. For the rest he must get his cricket as the lesser lights do, with a district team in the city in which he lives; and district competitions are run on the basis of two-day matches, on successive Saturday afternoons. The same is fundamentally true of all sports in Australia.

The Australian people are predominantly British, both by ancestry and heritage, and so are most of their sports. Polo and hockey, from India, have never achieved wide popularity—polo rather surprisingly, for so many outback Australians are superb natural horsemen. Lacrosse and ice-hockey from Canada, are even less widely played. There is a very limited public for American baseball, and none at all for American football. Yet inevitably certain sporting pastimes grow out of the

## *Their Sports*

circumstances and geographical situation and way of life of a people. In spite of its youth as a nation, this is already true of Australia.

Australia is by no means the only country in the world which can boast a coastline of mile after mile of sandy beaches; nor are Australians the only people whose pleasure it is to disport themselves in the sea; but Australian surf-bathing, by a natural process of evolution, has developed into something thrillingly and splendidly unique.

On a sunny Saturday afternoon in summer, a hundred thousand people in Sydney may be playing or watching cricket or tennis, or some other form of organised sport; but four times a hundred thousand are, at the same time, to be found on one or other of the beaches that stretch, almost without break, for thirty or forty miles up and down the coast. The most popular of all the Sydney beaches, mainly because it is within easy reach of thickly populated suburbs, is Bondi, and it is no unusual thing to find eighty or ninety thousand people there on one day.

Excluding the very young and active, most people go to the beaches not to indulge in violent exercise, but (let's admit) to relax and laze in the sun; to "sunbake" in the Australian phrase; to doze a little, and read or chat a little, and to nibble a sandwich and perhaps drink a bottle of beer; and when the heat of the sun becomes too much, to slide into the enveloping and exhilarating coolness of the water.

To the vigorously inclined, surfing is much more than just a pleasant means of cooling off on a hot day. It is a vastly exciting sport, without rules it is true, and with no competitive element unless it be that of man against the sea; but, like all sports worthy of the name, requiring a high degree of skill.

The simplest and most popular form of surfing, is "shooting the breakers." To do this, you swim out to beyond the point where the waves break, wait for a suitable wave, and then ride to shore slightly in front of the crest.

Apart from the physical skill needed, it is also important to be able to judge the right sort of wave. There are "rollers" (the right sort) and "dumpers" (the wrong sort). If you are a novice and fall into the error of attempting to shoot a "dumper," you will find yourself flung unceremoniously into the air, and then down into the trough as it breaks, with such violence that should your dignity be the only thing injured you may count yourself fortunate.

If you are really adept, you may do your shooting on a surf-board—eight to ten feet long, and shaped very much like an ordinary ironing board, with a sharp end and a blunt one—or on surf-skis, or in a canoe.

## *The People*

"Dumpers" are not the only danger. In the waters off most Australian beaches there is at times a strong undertow, or under-water current, which can drag even a strong swimmer a quarter of a mile out to sea in a matter of a minute. Experienced surfers know that these currents are usually narrow, and are able to get out of them quickly by swimming across them at right angles to the direction of their flow. But for others, to be caught in an undertow is always a frightening experience, and many times it has been a fatal one.

Less frequent, but more terrifying, is the danger of sharks. The sharks which range Australian waters are mostly tigers, grey nurses and hammerheads; they come in every size from six to eighteen feet or more; their cruising speed is reputed to be something like sixty miles an hour; and they are all of them vicious man-eaters. Normally, they are cautious of coming too close inshore, but they do so occasionally in pursuit of a school of fish or if they are particularly hungry. And when they do, it's time to catch the first available breaker and make all haste ashore.

To guard against undertow, sharks and the other lesser perils of surfing, every beach has its life-saving club, composed of unpaid volunteers who undergo an intensive training in all phases of surf life-saving and first aid, and who, in their spare time, are rostered several hours a week for beach patrol duty. Discipline is strict, duties are arduous and often dangerous, and would-be members are obliged, before acceptance, to prove their swimming in a series of exacting tests. Yet almost every club has a long waiting-list, and it is the ambition of every small boy to become a life-saver. They save thousands of lives, but are rarely thanked by those they save.

At the major beaches there are high bell towers; members of the life-saving patrols keep watch for sharks, and clang the bell as soon as one is seen. In recent years, on some of the more popular beaches, this rather elementary system has been augmented by the use of spotting planes, which fly over the beach and well out to sea, and keep in two-way radio contact with the duty patrol.

Another sport not in itself Australian, which over the years has taken on certain peculiarly Australian characteristics, is sailing.

Every state capital city in Australia is located on either a navigable river or an estuary or the sea, and so sailing is a widely popular sport in all of them. Every summer week-end the blue waters of Sydney Harbour are dotted by hundreds (it may well be thousands) of triangles of white canvas. Many people sail for the sheer delight of it, and many more find an additional thrill in competition. Regular races are held for all types of

## *Their Sports*

craft, but for speed and excitement there is nothing that quite compares with the eighteen-footer.

These were first designed and developed in Australia, and have spread like a rash to other parts of the world. They are open boats, fairly broad in the beam, but of shallow draught, with high masts which carry a tremendous spread of sail, out of all proportion it would appear to their size. They are manned by a crew of six, every one of whom has to be an expert. With such a weight of canvas the safety margin is small, and even the most skilled crews cannot anticipate every vagary of the breeze. Capsizes are frequent, but a ducking is all part of the fun. At high speeds the bow of the boat is clear of the water, and the hull is almost planing. Australian eighteen-footers are reputed to be the fastest sailing craft in the world, and this may well be; speeds up to twenty-six knots an hour have been recorded over measured distances, and even higher speeds have been claimed.

Surfing and sailing are not Australian in origin, but the manner in which they have developed has given them certain characteristics peculiar to the country. However, there is one sport which is entirely Australian, which was deliberately conceived to be so, and which will probably always remain so since the few half-hearted attempts that have been made to popularise it elsewhere have created scarcely a ripple of interest. It is Australian National football—more commonly known as “Aussie Rules.”

Australians are indefatigable, and at times very good, footballers, but they have never made up their minds which set of rules to follow. This is also true of the British, who divide their interest between three codes, but three among fifty million people is a vastly different proposition from four codes among eight and a half million.

In New South Wales and Queensland the important game is Rugby League, which is played on a semi-professional basis; that is, players in the top grades are paid, but in most cases insufficiently for them to make a living from the game. Following a close second is the original brand of fifteen-a-side Rugby, which is entirely amateur. Association football, or soccer, has a somewhat smaller public, except in the coal-mining areas of New South Wales, where it is strongly entrenched; and the Australian code lags far behind, a sort of poor relation, regarded with a vague feeling of shame, and, though tolerated, never by any chance encouraged.

In Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania the opposite is true. Soccer has a few devotees most of whom are expatriate



## *The People*

Britons, amateur Rugby has a small (one might risk saying snob) following among certain schools and colleges, and professional Rugby does not exist at all. The big game, in fact the *only* game for the public, is Australian Rules.

Why this wide divergence of opinion should exist between the states is a matter that has never been explained. But it does much more than exist. The respective merits and shortcomings of the conflicting codes are subjects of constant and often heated arguments. Indeed, if there is ever a civil war between the states it will almost certainly be over this issue.

As a New South Welshman, born and bred, and in my youth an indifferent but ardent Rugby player, I find it difficult to understand the Australian game, and doubly difficult to achieve a state of detachment sufficient to give an intelligible description of it.

Australian National football was devised in the early years of the present century by a solemn conclave of gentlemen, met together for the avowed purpose of creating a game that would embody the best features of both Rugby and soccer. Who, I wonder, thought it necessary? But at all costs let us remain objective.

It is played by teams of eighteen aside and, presumably to avoid congestion, the field, which is oval-shaped, is much larger than that for other codes. There are two sets of goals at each end, without crossbars, and the object is to kick the ball (which is the same shape as for Rugby) through them. A kick through the centre goal earns six points, and through the outer goals one point. The rules regarding off-side are much the same as those for soccer, which means that each man in a team keeps a close and wary eye on his opposite number. You are allowed to handle the ball, as in Rugby, and you can kick it or punch it, but you cannot pass it. If you run when carrying it, you must bounce it every five yards. You are allowed to tackle in the soccer sense, but not in the Rugby sense; in other words, you must not lay hands on an opponent. There are no set scrums.

The effect is that the game becomes one of bewilderingly quick movement from end to end, of long and accurate kicking (both punts and drop-kicks), and of high-marking—that is to say, leaping into the air and reaching for the ball. This requires the sort of elevation that ballet dancers train from infancy to achieve; and to those, who in their ignorance fail to appreciate the finer points of the game, this aspect of it does seem rather more like ballet than football. It certainly looks very fetching and graceful in photographs.

## *Their Sports*

Pros and cons apart, the fact remains that in the states where it is favoured, the Australian game has become a cult. Matches between rival district teams in the larger cities create a feeling of partisanship among players and spectators as fierce, and as blindly loyal, as that which motivated and sustained the Wars of the Roses.

Australians as a race are players rather than spectators. An event such as a Davis Cup challenge tie or a vital game in a cricket Test series against England will always draw a capacity attendance, but for many important international and interstate events there are seats to spare. In Sydney, an international Rugby match will be fortunate to attract a crowd of more than fifty thousand; and an ordinary week-end district competition game may draw as few as two thousand. But in Melbourne, a smaller city than Sydney with a population of only 1,360,000, it is not uncommon for an Australian Rules club match to be watched by a hundred thousand people. This must, of course, prove something.

I have left till last the subject of horseracing. If Australian football is a cult in certain states, then horseracing, throughout the country is a religion—or not far short of it, anyway. And if you think that is overstating the case, let me tell you about Phar Lap.

Phar Lap was in his prime about twenty-five years ago. He stood formidably among his rivals of the day as a giant among pygmies, the greatest race-horse Australia—and, in the belief of most Australians, the world—has ever seen. He was a great, ungainly animal, with an easy, loping stride of phenomenal length, an equable temperament, and the courage of a lion; and everybody, even dear old ladies, who had never been near a racecourse in their lives, loved him. When there were no more worlds for him to conquer in his own country, Phar Lap went to America. He won a big race in California, and there he fell mysteriously ill and died.

His death was reported in streamer headlines on the front page of almost every newspaper in Australia, and for twenty-four hours the country went virtually into mourning. This is no exaggeration, but sober fact. His mortal shell was brought home, taxidermists and embalmers were called in, and even to-day his stuffed carcass and his preserved heart remain the most popular exhibits in one of Australia's national museums.

Racing was imported to Australia from England, and it still preserves many English traditions, especially in the names of racing events. Most states have their Derby, their Oaks, and their St. Leger for three-year-olds, and their Gimcrack Stakes and Champagne Stakes for two-year-olds.

## *The People*

There is also a Newmarket Handicap, a Doncaster Handicap, an Epsom Handicap, an Eclipse Stakes, and a Grand National Steeplechase.

Australian breeders have always turned to England to enrich and replenish their studs, and the blood of the great English thoroughbred lines runs freely through the veins of almost all Australian racing stock. Phar Lap was sired by Night Raid, who was a son of the great Bend Or; and an earlier champion, Carbine, who was bred in New Zealand but did most of his racing in Australia, was by The Musket, a descendant of Touchstone.

Hurdle and steeplechase racing have never achieved the popularity in Australia that they have in England, and rarely if ever are there programmes devoted entirely, on National Hunt lines, to jumping events. A day's flat-racing may begin with a hurdle race, as curtain-raiser to entertain the early-comers, but that is about all. Even the Australian Grand National is a poor substitute for its English counterpart.

Generally speaking racing circuits are smaller than in England. Many are less than a mile round. There is nothing to compare with the long straight at Newmarket, except perhaps at Flemington, the main course in Melbourne, which permits a straight run of six furlongs. As a rule racecourses are built on flat land, with nothing in the centre to obstruct the view, so that with adequate glasses a racegoer can follow every second of a race.

Again generally speaking, the emphasis in Australia tends to be on actual racing rather than breeding. In England it has become almost standard practice to retire a successful three-year-old to stud, while he remains at his peak, rather than run the risk of his being injured or losing form and so dropping out of favour with breeders. In Australia this is rarely done. Most champion three-year-olds race on until they are five or six or even more, and then go to stud. There are also more geldings raced in Australia than in England.

In proportion to population, there are more racing tracks, and most of them are closer to the large centres of population. Flemington in Melbourne, and Randwick in Sydney, are both within ten or fifteen minutes of the city centres. In all the big cities racing is held, on one track or another, every Saturday afternoon throughout the year. During the big carnivals there are mid-week meetings as well, and some of the smaller tracks also race during the week.

Yet in spite of their absorption with racing, and in spite of the facilities available, Australians are not great racegoers. Naturally the big events draw big crowds as they do anywhere, but it is rare for a

## *Their Sports*

routine week-end meeting, which contains no special event of interest, to attract an attendance of more than twenty thousand people, or thirty thousand at the outside.

The truth is that the spectacle of racing has far less appeal to most Australians than the opportunity it affords for a gamble. Off-the-course betting, though prohibited by law in some states, is to the average Australian what football pools are to the average Englishman—a chance for a mild weekly flutter. And, in spite of the critics, it is probably no more harmful to his morals or pocket. Racing guides are pored over with the same eagerness in Australia as football tables in England; and students of form are as knowledgeable (and as often wrong) about the chances of the runners in the Flying Handicap as their English counterparts are about the prospects of Fulham and Arsenal.

Because most off-the-course betting in Australia is transacted at starting price odds, it is familiarly known as "S.P." The practice is as old almost as racing itself, but its popularity is due to radio. Notwithstanding their official disapproval, the authorities have long since realised the impossibility of stamping out S.P. betting, and except for an occasional token attempt they no longer seriously try. Indeed, in some states the inevitable has already been accepted, and repressive legislation has been replaced by a system of licensed betting shops.

In the understandable absence of statistics, it is impossible even to guess how many adult Australians are regular S.P. bettors, but the figure is certainly high. On the very special occasion of the Melbourne Cup, I am prepared to take a chance and say it is ninety-nine per cent. Hundreds of thousands of people who would never dream of gambling at any other time of the year, who could not identify a chestnut from a bay, and who haven't the faintest idea of the difference between a "straight-out" and an "each-way" bet, succumb with no noticeable qualms of conscience to the lure of the Cup.

The Melbourne Cup, Australia's most important race of the year, is run over two miles at Flemington on the first Tuesday in November, as a climax to Victoria's big Spring racing carnival. It is more than just a horse race; it is a national occasion. People travel two thousand miles or more to see it run, and all hotel accommodation in Melbourne is booked for weeks before. By a happy coincidence, the annual manoeuvres of the Royal Australian Navy invariably bring the fleet to Melbourne just in time for it. The whole week is one of gay social festivity, and Cup day itself is a public holiday throughout Victoria. There is nothing in Australia closer in spirit and form to the Spanish fiesta.

## *The People*

In other states work is supposed to carry on as usual, but as the time of the race draws near, there is an undercurrent of excitement. In shops and cafés and offices and private homes, people gather around radio sets. Factory workers leave their benches, clerks their office desks. Transport slows down and comes to a stop. A million hands twiddle a million dials. There is a tense hush, and then through the loud-speakers come the words: "They're off." For three and a half minutes the attention of all Australia is concentrated on a score or so horses racing around a circular track. Then quite suddenly it is over. Betting slips are torn up, stake winnings collected. The crowds break up, the wheels begin to turn again, the furnaces to glow, and a country stirs itself and comes back to active life.

## *—AND CRICKET by J. H. Fingleton*

IN JUNE, 1952, I saw a delightful sight on Moore Park, Sydney. I was travelling in the bus to the city's main airport at Mascot, and the route took me past the Sydney Cricket Ground, past cricket and the golfing activities of Moore Park and then—though this was not a particularly salubrious part of the journey—past the tanneries of Mascot to the aerodrome.

At Moore Park, as we flitted past, I caught a glimpse of a very young mother bowling a soft ball under-hand to her small son aged about three. He, armed with a toy bat, made a terrific slash to leg and his mother was busily and happily scuttling after the ball when they went out of my vision. This took place on one of the many concrete pitches that are dotted all over Moore Park and, indeed, all over the parks of the capital cities and towns of Australia.

In June, 1953, I saw another sight, this time in England; and the vivid contrast made me reflect on the cricketing advantages that Australia has over England. I was travelling this time from Chesterfield to Sheffield, two busy industrial areas, and on a rubbish dump I saw young English lads trying to grapple with the game of cricket.

The word "grapple," I think, is justified. In Australia, the lad of three had the ball bouncing to him truly along a concrete pitch. He not only felt he could deal with it, but he did, in fact, deal with it. On the rubbish dump in the industrial north of England the ball either bumped

## *Their Sports*

high or shot through low, and one marvelled at the enthusiasm that could keep these young boys devoted to a game under such appalling conditions.

On three tours of England I have seen dozens of cricketers in action during long summer evenings on Parker's Piece, Cambridge. It was here that the famous Sir Jack Hobbs learnt the rudiments of batsmanship (his knighthood in Coronation Year gave cricketers everywhere intense pleasure) and though the game has never produced a more correct batsman than Hobbs, one had only to see cricketers in action on Parker's Piece to appreciate how much he must have had to amend his style when he began playing on true pitches. I once saw a ball there from a good length fly feet over the batsman's head. No Larwood, no Lindwall has ever bowled a more ferocious-looking ball, and the gentleman who delivered it looked as though he meant to be ferocious. Nobody could have induced me to take strike against him on such a pitch.

Yet, all over England, young cricketers must battle under such handicaps. By climate, by conditions, by opportunities, the youth of Australia have a big lead in their introduction to the game.

Cricket came to Australia with the English army. The earliest pitches, made of dirt, were near the burial ground where the Sydney Town Hall and St. Andrew's Cathedral now stand. Players wore no pads or gloves; the ball was made of sawdust and the bats of cedar. Games between the youthful element sometimes got rough and rowdy, and the police were forced to take a hand, the more youthful of the players taking shelter from the disturbance in the scrub at Cockle Bay, now Darling Harbour.

In 1840, Hyde Park, which was the old racecourse of the colony, was commissioned as the cricket ground. The main pitch was opposite the present Park Street, and there was a one-storied hostelry on the corner of Park and Elizabeth Streets, where the present King's Head Hotel now stands. This old pub had quite a connection with cricket. It was run by a man called Clarkson and he, with two eyes to business, encouraged barracking and big hitting. With the one he aimed to improve his sales, and with the other he provided free grog for big hits. It is an interesting thought that Australian barracking, renowned throughout the cricketing world, had its origin under such auspices. Clarkson boasted that he oiled the machinery which kept the game going with a swing and a swig.

In those days a double row of fine oaks ran from Saint James (where

## *The People*

the present courts of justice now stand) down to Park Street. It was the ambition of every player to carry the oaks. Merry was the roistering in Clarkson's pub when the great feat was performed. Play those days was on a Monday and only the leading clubs—Australian, Currency, Union, Citizens, Marylebone, City, Albert and Victoria—were allowed the honour of playing on the colony's leading field.

Then Hyde Park was closed and cricketing headquarters moved to the Sydney Domain. Here, to-day, you will still see civil servants in action during the lunch hour, the surreptitious sandwich having been disposed of in office hours before play starts. I once had a fellow clubman who batted for a month of lunch-hours.

As in England, big betting featured in the early days of Australian cricket. The long series of games between New South Wales and Victoria, first as inter-colonial games and then as inter-state ones developing into the Sheffield Shield competition, began on a challenge supported by money. Victoria challenged the mother state to a game for £500. N.S.W. snubbed the money angle, saying they preferred to play for the honour of the game. They did—and won, 80-86 against 63-38.

So began the long line of inter-state matches, and if they ended early single-wicket matches were arranged. A game between three of the Gregorys, D., E. and C. (the Gregorys are the most famous cricketing family in Australian history), against the Victorians, Conway, Cosstick and Watts, attracted a crowd of 5,000. It was won by the Gregorys. A game that caused great interest was between a man named Trumper (no relation to the immortal Victor) and his dog against three other men. The dog was the fieldsman and Trumper was allowed an extra innings for the dog, which fielded so brilliantly that Trumper won although the betting was 5-1 against.

There is a grandstand at the Sydney Cricket Ground named the Sheridan Stand. It treasures the memory of another grand Australian cricketing family. Ned, one of the best of our early players, was born at The Rocks, Sydney. His father went through the Battle of Waterloo; his father's brother was killed in the Battle of Trafalgar. Sheridan thought that he had had more than enough of the old world's troubles and migrated to the new. The Aborigines then had camps at Woolloomooloo and young Ned used to sit near them, catching beautiful whiting off the wharf. He played cricket in the Domain and then at Redfern, where the headquarters of cricket went to from the Domain. One day, after school, one of his fellows said to him, "Ned, the English are here." This was 1861. Word had come to Sydney by "bush telegraph"

## *Their Sports*

that the first English cricket team to visit Australia was approaching Sydney Heads.

"We rushed down to the wharf," said Ned, "and saw the *Great Britain* with the visiting cricketers aboard. They wore deer stalkers with blue ribbons, and received a wonderful welcome. Eight greys drew their coach through Sydney and they had to pass under a magnificent arch. Business houses closed for the day and Parliament adjourned."

The English team did great things for Australian cricket as Caffyn, a sound batsman, stayed on to coach. Two caterers, Spiers and Pond, put up £7,000 to bring out this first English team and six years later a man named Hayman organised and trained a team of Aborigines for eighteen months before taking them on a tour of England. Some of these players were named Bullocky, Red Cap, Twopenny Tiger, Dick-a-Dick, Sundown, Mosquito, Jim Crow, King Cole and Mullagh. They could not have been too bad a side. They played against a team called All Comers in Melbourne before departure and were only beaten 142 to 127. Their tour record was also presentable—14 wins, 14 losses and 19 draws. In addition, they gave boomerang and spear exhibitions; but financially the tour was a flop.

The first white Australian team went to England in 1878. It included some of the most famous cricket names of all time—Dave Gregory (captain), Spofforth, Garrett, the Bannermans, Murdoch, Blackham, Horan. There was a loud laugh at Lord's when Dr. Grace swept the first ball of the match from Allan to leg for four, but Allan knocked the famous Englishman over next ball. Half an hour later the English side was out for 33 and all Lord's was stunned. The Australians made 41. Grace was out second ball to Spofforth and England could manage only 19. Australia won by nine wickets, and Australian cricket had truly arrived.

I find two things interesting about that first team. In the first place it consisted of only the eleven players. Nowadays a team to England comprises seventeen. A photograph of the team shows that none was clean-shaven; they wore striped blazers and black boots which were studded. It was the custom of the times in a photograph to name the everyday avocations of the players. After the name of one we find (in brackets) that he was a banker. He looks the part, a rather shrewd man. Then comes a schoolmaster, with a kindly face; a post-master, who looks efficient, and so on. In the photographic manner of the times the participants look to the north and to the south—never straight at the camera—and they show their emblems of the cricket trade. A bats-



## *The People*

man has a bat between his knee; a bowler cups the ball; the scorer has his pencil poised and a vigilant look in his eye.

The constant inter-change of visits with England and Australia has proceeded down through the years with the break only of the two wars—and these wars atoned for the tragic loss of future champions by yielding two grand service teams which were of considerable help in re-establishing the game after the breaks. They yielded, too, immense wealth to Australia because the first, the A.I.F. side of 1919, found Jack Gregory, perhaps the most distinguished of all the illustrious Gregorys. He was an unknown when he left for the war. The last service side established Keith Miller. He had played a little cricket before the war but his tour of England after the war brought him rapidly to the forefront as one of the greatest all-rounders of history.

Based on the principles which the early English professionals taught us, Australia has evolved its own particular type of cricket. I said at the beginning how climate and natural facilities yield cricketers of class with seemingly little difficulty. Test cricket between England and Australia—and one suggests there is no other Test cricket like it—has been proceeding for less than a century, but Australia has given to the game dozens of names which will live a cricket eternity.

No other player has known the publicity, or brought such publicity to the game, as Sir Donald Bradman. The game in all its many years has never produced—not even in Dr. W. G. Grace—a batsman who made such prolific scores with such incredible regularity. It was said, previously, that every batsman had his ups and downs, his runs of big and small scores: to do so was only human, but Sir Donald almost disproved this theory of mortality. His one poor run of scores was at the beginning of the 1934 English tour.

I have written of the many concrete pitches that abound in the parklands and the suburbs of Australia. I wrote, too, that the early pitches of the colony were made of dirt. Australia has long known superb turf pitches made from Bulli soil in Sydney, and from Merri Creek soil in Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane. Adelaide gets its own soil from the nearby hills and most towns have an adjacent creek or river-bed that provides good, heavy dark soil most adaptable for cricket pitches. The national capital of Canberra draws its soil from the Molonglo River that winds through the city, and all of these soils enable grade cricketers to play on pitches of excellent texture.

Years ago the junior cricketers of Australia played on coir-matting stretched over ant-bed, a hard clay. This was a splendid surface, common



*THE WEALTH which came from this great open-cut gold mine at Mount Moigan, Queensland, was the original source of capital for oil exploration in Persia*



THE KARRI FORESTS of *Western Australia*

## *Their Sports*

also to South Africa and Test matches in the early history of that country. This pitch gave bowlers spin and lift, but encouraged strokes because the ball rose fast and high for pull and cut strokes, particularly square of the wicket. Such pitches needed watering and maintenance and it was found that concrete pitches stood wear and tear better, so they have become the mode throughout Australia for so-called junior cricketers.

This cricket is the back-bone of our Test cricket. Mats are stretched across the concrete for the competitive games on Saturday afternoons, but the rest of the week the pitches lie bare in the parklands to be used by anybody who wishes. Thus the mother I saw bowling to her small son; thus the schoolboys in the afternoons; thus the schoolboys in their organised competition games of a Wednesday afternoon. Thus, from the very first, a youngster in Australia plays on a pitch of true bounce and behaviour.

Does this count in the cricketing technique of a country? I think it does because the average Australian learns the game quicker than his English counterpart. Contrast those boys I saw in the Sheffield district and how difficult it is for them to learn the various strokes. They never know how the ball will come to them off an uneven surface. It could bump; it could shoot. Thus the playing of strokes must be subordinated to the necessity of keeping out the ball that behaves oddly. The ball never behaves oddly on an Australian concrete pitch and in that, I believe, is the reason why our cricketers bloom so early. Bradman had made the then world's record Test score of 334 in 1930 when he was only twenty-two. Harvey, Craig, Hill, McCabe, Archer and others were chosen to play England before reaching the age of twenty.

Also, cricket is a much simpler game in Australia than in England. The weather largely accounts for this, and so does the concrete pitch. A ball will not swing to anywhere near the same degree in Australia as it does in England. Often a new ball in Australia, on a hot day, will not move in the air at all; sometimes, in the heavy atmosphere of England, it will barely stop swinging all day. Then, too, the ball does not move off the pitch in Australia as it can be made to do in England. In delivery, Bedser will cut his fingers down the seam of the ball, and will see it change direction off the pitch in England. This is called "seaming" the ball, but it rarely pays dividends in Australia. Many an English bowler who has won his success in England by merely rolling the ball as it leaves the hand, finds he gets no movement off the pitch in Australia. The soil is harder and drier; the grass is not as green and so the ball does not bite.

## *The People*

There is a type of bowler in England known as the "tweaker." He is essential for every county side, more often than not bowling from around the stumps. He moves the ball in from the off—not very much, but sufficient in England—to cause snicks to fieldsmen in the slips or grouped close in on the on-side. I can recall Goddard and Sinfield of Gloucestershire, Laker of Surrey, Tattersall of Lancashire, Smith of Derbyshire, Mortimore of Gloucestershire, Illingworth of Yorkshire, Ashman of Sussex, and others.

We have not their counterpart in Australia. Such bowlers would find they could hardly move the ball at all off the ordinary first-class Australian pitch, and it is true that no matter how great the harvest of wickets they have taken at home, English selectors look with disfavour on choosing such bowlers for Australia. Tattersall came in 1951 but he was a replacement flown out for an injured man.

We have had our off-spinners, plenty of them. There was no finer exponent of this art than D. Blackie, the veteran Victorian, who played first for Australia in a Test when he was near the half-century mark in years. On the best of pitches Blackie could obtain remarkable spin from the off, but he cupped the ball for spin, giving it tremendous finger work as the ball left his hand. I. Johnson, of Victoria, was another off-breaker who achieved success in the higher sphere and he followed a long line of Australians like W. P. Howell, Trumble and R. K. Oxenham, to mention but a few. They all differed from the average English "tweaker" in that they spun the ball; they didn't cut or "tweak" it.

As Australian playing conditions are so different from those in England, so have Australians evolved their own particular style of cricket. It would be true, I think, to say that the average English first-class batsman follows rather closely to a certain mould. This, possibly, is due to coaching in youth—coaching that embraces the same type of forward and defensive movements. The Australian is no great believer in coaching. Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia have official coaches but the two premier cricketing states, New South Wales and Victoria, have seldom worried about such things. Their theory is that if a lad is interested enough in the game to advance, he will seek out a hero and copy his style.

Thus, from New South Wales, for example, we have the production of such gifted players as Trumper, still revered as the greatest stylist the game has produced; Macartney, another great stylist but in his own way, a way that differed from that of Trumper's; Kippax, whose art flowed in the Trumper vein; Bradman, whose style at the beginning caused the

## *Their Sports*

knowing ones to shudder, not knowing that his future greatness was to stem from such heresies; MacCabe, than whom on his day the cricketing world knew no greater and who was cast along Macartney lines: Bardsley, a disciple of the upright, the proper, the precise; Morris, another left-hander, whose principles of play were entirely opposite to any Australian opening batsman who had gone before; W. A. Brown, who never departed from the straight line of orthodoxy and was one for all young players to copy; M. A. Noble; R. A. Duff; J. M. Taylor; T. J. E. Andrews; and so on and on down through the years from Bannerman to Craig.

Victoria, too, has produced a miscellany of styles: W. W. Armstrong, big, bluff and dominating; Vernon Ransford, a dashing, brilliant left-hander, forerunner of a style of which Neil Harvey was to be another most capable exponent; Woodfull, dour, capable, full of temperament and fight; Ponsford, with a style all his own among the great Australians but second only to Bradman in amassing huge totals; Hassett, precise, concise, watchful and classical in his best moments.

South Australia had the brilliant Clem Hill, the left-hander who took England by storm in the early twentieth century. That state produced, also, George Giffen, one of the greatest all-rounders of all time.

So, too, with bowlers—all makes and sizes and styles: Hordern, Grimmett and Mailey with slow curly spin and deceptive bosies; Gregory, McDonald, Ernie Jones, Cotter, McCormick, Wall, Lindwall and Miller with speed to make the greatest feel pangs of apprehension; Ferris and Turner of the early days, with staggering loads of wickets in England; Spofforth, the Demon; Trumble; Noble; Fleetwood Smith, the left-handed counterpart of Mailey and Hordern who spun viciously from the off with his bosie coming from the leg; O'Reilly, a type all his own with true claim to being, at one stage, the greatest bowler in the world; Ironmonger and Hornibrook, typical left-handers.

The bowlers have come as nature intended them, true to their inclinations. All-rounders, too, there have been in plenty—Gregory, Miller, Kelleway, Noble, Armstrong. Australian wicket-keepers have established a special niche for themselves in the cricket hall of fame—Blackham, Kelly, Carter, Oldfield and Tallon.

All these famous cricketers, and many more not named, have stemmed from the game which the British military first introduced into Australia. Caffyn taught it first professionally, and well, and then the native Australians took over, learning much from the visits of famous English teams to Australia. It is now an unbroken line, a line of great deeds and

### *The People*

precedents that have covered the cricket fields of the world; and it is a line that the young mothers such as the one I saw in Moore Park, and the men of the outback as they travel their innumerable miles over the paddocks and the ranges to play their week-end matches, and the young men of the cities as they hasten from their office of an evening to their club nets, and the boys of the concrete pitches on the parklands, will maintain unbroken for countless generations to come.

## THE PEOPLE V

---

*For the stranger who might think there is too much emphasis on things sporting, the Australian has an answer as ready as the Londoner's remark about policemen: "Ah, but you should see our pictures."*

*The most unexpected thing about Australian paintings is not that they have quality but that they have a market. No art can exist in a vacuum, and nothing contributes quite so much to the creation of a vacuum as the absence of cash customers. Australians have often neglected the work of their creative artists in other fields, but in painting they have always been ready to give them generous patronage, and a contemporary artist has been paid as much as £5,000 by a local collector for one of his paintings.*

*Colin MacInnes, formerly art critic for the London Observer and a frequent member of the B.B.C. critics' panel, was born in England but went to Australia as a very young child and was educated there. In many ways he thinks of himself as an Australian, although a strict reading of the Nationality and Citizenship Act (1948) might deny him, and his novel *June in Her Spring* has an Australian bush setting.*



# Their Art

COLIN MACINNES

AS SOON as the first Europeans began to explore Australia, they began to paint it. Men are not satisfied by the mere physical conquest of a new country; the urge to understand what they have won is just as great. The discovery of the unknown shores and the vast inland tracts of Australia could not be complete until the artists, too, had made their exploration; until, as the generations passed, they had painted a portrait of the continent in which their fellow-countrymen could recognise the shape and spirit of the land which had become their home.

The earliest painters were men who still looked to Europe, who reported on Australia not to Australians themselves—for these were not yet born—but to the curious scientists and politicians of the old world. Sydney Parkinson, the natural history draughtsman on board the *Endeavour*, and the first European to paint a picture in Australia, has left us his *Two Natives of New Holland Advancing to Combat*—a picture which seems to symbolise the intrepidity of the white explorers, and the brave, but vain, determination of the Aborigines to hold the continent for themselves.

William Westall, who was chosen by Benjamin West, the Royal Academy's president, to accompany Captain Flinders on the *Investigator*, was the first to depict the coast of South Australia and to paint a seascape of Port Phillip Bay; but his most famous painting is his *View of Wreck Reef Bank*, a dramatic picture which records his own experiences when H.M.S. *Porpoise* struck a coral reef off the Queensland coast in 1802. Most celebrated of all these early topographical artists is Augustus Earle—"the wandering artist" as he was called—who, after voyages and shipwrecks in many lands, arrived in Australia in 1825 and stayed there for three years. Such was his fame that he was commissioned to decorate the dining-room for the farewell banquet to Governor Brisbane, and he painted eight views from a *Panorama of Sydney* which aroused the wonder and astonishment of Londoners when it was exhibited in Leicester Square in 1827.

## *Their Art*

These artists were birds of passage; but others settled in Australia—freely or against their will. Thomas Watling, "the convict artist," has left us the earliest picture of Sydney, his *Sydney Cove*, 1794, painted in the seventh year of the city's settlement. This is a charming, clumsy and somewhat exotic landscape which seems to herald the naïve but imaginative style of Henri Rousseau the Douanier. In view of the artist's evident delight in the scene, it is a little surprising to find him writing home to England that "the landscape painter may in vain seek here for that beauty which arises from happy-opposed offscapes."

Another painter of talent who must have viewed the new land with a jaundiced eye was Thomas Griffiths Wainewright; who, after forging the names of the trustees to his grandfather's will, and poisoning his heavily insured sister-in-law, was transported to Hobart in 1837. Accompanied by an armed guard, he was allowed to visit the homes of the Tasmanian notabilities to paint their portraits. But the ladies, in particular, were perturbed by his "sinister expression," and in the elegant, mannered paintings he did of them—somewhat in the manner of Fuseli—his sitters wear a slightly uneasy look.

Another Tasmanian settler—but of a very different kind—was John Glover who, at the age of 63, and after a successful business career in Europe, felt the call of a new land that so many have felt since, and went out to Tasmania in 1831. His *Last of the Tasmanian Aborigines at Risdon* is a record of the strange and miserable race whose wanton extermination must haunt our conscience for all time.

On the mainland, Richard Read established himself as the first portrait painter of consequence. His picture of Governor Macquarie, which seems to be influenced by Goya, gives a most striking impression of that shrewd, tough, humane, imaginative man. Another artist whom the great governor protected was John William Lewin the naturalist, the plates of whose *Natural History of the Lepidopterous Insects in New South Wales* were the first engravings executed in the country. Lewin also started the first Australian art school in Sydney, but it won little support, and while collecting material for his *Birds of New Holland* he was obliged to paint portraits at forty shillings apiece, and to support himself by opening The Bunch of Grapes inn and stores. Governor Macquarie (who appointed the first—and only—Poet Laureate of Australia, one Michael Robinson, whom Richard Read painted) did what he could to win for Lewin the post of official artist to the colony; but unsuccessfully, so that all the Governor was able to offer his protégé was the sinecure post of coroner instead.

## *The People*

By the eighteen thirties, Australian art had entered what might be called the second phase of its development. The arrival of substantial settlers who, though European-born, had come out to make Australia their home, held out some hope to artists of a growing local patronage, and also of the possibility of painting the Australian scene for men who knew it intimately in their daily working lives. As is often the case, the hour produced its men: Conrad Martens, and the "father" of Australian painting, Abram Louis Buvelot. Martens, though born in England, was of German origin, and Buvelot was pure Swiss. But other cases in which artists of alien blood have been midwives at the birth of a native art, are not unknown; the English school itself owes much to the presence in England, at a critical moment, of Holbein, Rubens, and Van Dyck.

Conrad Martens was thirty when he reached Sydney in 1835. A pupil of Copley Fielding, he had succeeded Augustus Earle as artist aboard H.M.S. *Beagle*, and had been a friend of Darwin's during his Southern American expeditions. It is true that Martens still saw Australia through European eyes. His celebrated *Sydney from the North Shore* of 1842 is a precise, delicate, strongly composed landscape, yet one that might be of some European bay. But his thoughtful, idealised style has a breadth and distinction far above that of the earlier topographical draughtsmen; and he set standards of poetic vision and professional competence against which all other Australian painters then had to measure their own.

Abram Buvelot's contribution was even more decisive. Thirteen years younger than Martens, he lived nearly forty years in Australia and long enough, until his death in 1888, to influence the young artists of the authentic Australian school not only by the force of his international reputation (in Brazil, where he had lived for eighteen years, the King had given him a studio in the palace), but also by the very fact of his actual survival among these younger men.

From a purely artistic point of view the work of Martens may seem more personal and more refined, but Buvelot's painting which, in its honest sympathy for nature, recalls the work of the painters of the Barbizon school, is undoubtedly more vigorous and inspiring. Though still a "European" he was the first to paint the Australian scene on a bold and generous scale, with a feeling for its vastness and its particular nobility. To that influence must be added the high but unassuming conception which he had of the artist's responsibility and dignity. He was by all accounts a painter with a deep sense of duty to his vocation—though

## *Their Art*

not by any means a man without a dry sense of humour. To the lady who complained that there were no kangaroos or wallabies in his landscapes, he answered: "But there are, madam; only they are hidden by the scrub."

One of Buvelot's most famous paintings is his *Winter Morning near Heidelberg*, and Heidelberg—a township above Melbourne overlooking the Yarra valley—is a name with a particular magic for all who admire Australian painting in its "golden age" of the 'eighties and 'nineties. It was there, in 1888, that the greatest of a series of "Artists' Camps" was organised by Tom Roberts, together with Arthur (later Sir Arthur) Streeton and Charles Conder, among others.

Though not an Australian by birth (he came out from England when he was thirteen), Tom Roberts must be considered, with Streeton, to be the true founding father of modern Australian art. His great achievement was to learn from the example of Buvelot, and from the pictorial innovations of the Impressionists whose work he studied in Europe, how to paint pictures of the Australian scene in a way that was authentically Australian both in spirit and in form. He saw Australia from within, and to record what he saw he borrowed from Impressionism a frank, vigorous, colourful, but thoughtful style. Though always conscious of the art movements of the capitals, both at home and in Europe, he carried his canvasses into the bush and to the outback regions of the continent's huge interior.

It must be remembered that, with distances so vast and with populations clustered in the coastal cities, even Australians themselves often were—and still are—remarkably unaware of the true nature and great variety of their native land. For them, Tom Roberts undertook a second "exploration" of Australia, and he not only succeeded in making his fellow-citizens aware of the physical aspects of their own country, but even in giving to his scenes of Australian life a legendary, almost a symbolic character. Paintings like *The Breakaway* with the boundary riders furiously pursuing the stampeding sheep across a hot, dry, unwelcoming landscape, or like *Bailed Up* whose theme is the vanished bushrangers, have the quality of folklore found in Henry Lawson's stories or the ballads of "Banjo" Paterson.

Though perhaps not so original an artist as Roberts, the achievement of Arthur Streeton in the field of landscape itself is even greater. "Nature's scheme of colour in Australia is gold and blue," he has said, and learning from Tom Roberts and from Buvelot, he recorded for sixty years, until his death in 1942, his robust, vivid, poetical and affectionate vision of

## The People

Australia. Those who are familiar with the art of the Canadian Group of Seven (and particularly with the work of Tom Thompson, Arthur Lismer and A. Y. Jackson) will recognise in Streeton's work a similar excitement at the liberation of colour which Impressionism brought, and at the discovery that Australia, like Canada, held its own great, wide, lavish and sometimes sinister beauties, which none but the native-born and bred could capture with true love and understanding. Streeton's paintings of the Heidelberg period, like *Golden Summer* or *Still Glides the Stream* have, for anyone who loves Australia, an undying fascination; perhaps, as much as anything, because Streeton has taught us all to see the continent through his own admiring eyes.

Charles Conder, who later won such fame in Europe, spent seven of his most formative years (from fifteen to twenty-two) in Roberts' and Streeton's company, and shared in the artistic experiments of Heidelberg. And yet it is hard to see, not only in his later enamelled work, but even in pictures painted before he left Australia, much trace of a specifically Australian influence. A picture like *Departure of the S.S. Orient* recalls Boudin more than anyone else, and already has a European elegance and sophistication that are rare in Australian paintings as a whole. Yet, from the evidence of his letters alone, there is no doubt that Conder himself acknowledged a lasting debt to the lessons of his Australian period.

The "Artists' Camps" of the late 'eighties, in which so many talented young painters shared their experience and endeavour, were followed by the historic "Exhibition of 9 by 5 Impressions" in Melbourne in 1889. Nine inches by five was the size of the cigar-box lids on which Roberts, Streeton, Conder and others had painted many of their pictures. Most of these, priced at from one to nine guineas, were sold, and the remainder auctioned; but although successful financially, and among a growing band of admirers artistically, the show aroused the bitter rage of the conventional, and was criticised with the savage venom which has always characterised Australian art-politics.

The battle was won, however, and throughout the early decades of this century innumerable canvasses were painted in the "open air" style of Streeton—or in the "local scene" manner of Roberts. Too many, in fact. It must be confessed that in hands of less competence, and for minds of less sincerity, the "Heidelberg" manner could, and did, become flashy and tedious. As always, the discovery of to-day can be debased into the commonplace of to-morrow.

Another development of the "golden age" was in the graphic work

## *Their Art*

of the gifted artists who joined the staffs of the *Sydney Bulletin* and *Illustrated Sydney News*. *The Bulletin* in particular, was then, as subsequently, an astonishing forcing-ground for caricaturists and satirical draughtsmen of what was to become the dry, racy, sardonic Australian tradition. Phil May drew 900 drawings for *The Bulletin* in his three Australian years of 1885-8, and a native artist, Frank Mahony, a great lover of horses, won fame as the sympathetic and worthy illustrator of Paterson's poems and of Henry Lawson's bush stories. His portrait of Lawson, of 1896, shows the lean, watchful, kindly, humorous character that all his later admirers must imagine him to have been.

Later contributors to *The Bulletin* were two of the Lindsay brothers, Norman and Lionel (later Sir Lionel). Norman Lindsay, one of the most astonishing figures in Australian art and literature, after working at one of the Heidelberg camps, joined *The Bulletin* at the age of twenty-one, and quickly became known for the virtuosity and pungency of his graphic work. The Norman Lindsay world is sensual, fantastic and baroque, hectic and morbid at times, but filled with an abounding love of vigorous physical life. His illustrations of Boccaccio, Casanova and of Balzac, no less than his later novels like *The Cautious Amorist*, may have shocked those whose pleasure it is to be shocked, but his philosophical work, *Creative Effort*, reveals him as a most serious, if rather wayward, thinker; and in *Saturdee* and *The Magic Pudding* he has written, with his own illustrations, a book for boys and one for children that evoke the pleasures and pains of adolescence, and the dreams of boyhood, with the utmost force and charm.

His brother, Lionel Lindsay, the biographer of Conrad Martens and the author of a lively if prejudiced attack on modern painting called *Addled Art*, is known particularly for his sensitive etchings of the European as well as of the Australian scene. Another contributor to *The Bulletin* was Will Dyson, who will also be remembered as the political cartoonist of the London *Daily Herald*. Equally familiar to Englishmen is the work of David Low, who came to *The Bulletin* from New Zealand at the age of twenty-two, before going on to pillory the English politicians in a succession of London daily papers.

By the turn of the century, the conflict between the "academic" and "modern" styles had arisen in Australia as elsewhere; and before going on to describe the work of the more interesting "modern" artists, a word might be said here about some of those who won fame of a more conventional kind. Sir Bertram Mackennal, the only Australian to become a full Academician of the English Royal Academy, is re-

## *The People*

nowned as much for his decorative groups on public buildings (for instance, the massive reliefs on Melbourne's Parliament House) as for "classical" figures like his *Diana Wounded* in the Tate Gallery, London. Always tasteful and highly accomplished, his art seems equally cold and unoriginal. Also represented in the Tate by his *Ariadne* is Harold Parker, whose allegorical figures Londoners travelling in a No 11 bus can admire, or otherwise, as they sweep by the ponderous façade of Australia House.

In painting, the most notable academic figure is Sir John Longstaff, whose *Lady in Black* now in the Sydney National Gallery, is a popular favourite. A much more vigorous academic painter (and sculptor) is George W. Lambert, A.R.A. His portraits, his landscape panoramas, and his pictures of the First World War, no less than his sculptured monument to Henry Lawson and his heartfelt war memorials, are always energetic in execution and sincere.

Less praised in their day by the conservative, but more admired as time reveals originality, are three artists whose individual visions exclude them from any recognised group or school. The first of these is Hans Heysen, a painter of German origin who has studied and portrayed the eucalyptus with unusual love and care. Trees may seem a limited theme for a great artist, but the gum tree is such a compelling feature of the Australian scenery that it deserves its particular painter. "A combination of mightiness and delicacy," Heysen has called the gum, and in his dry, sun-baked ochred landscapes, the tangled confusion of the eucalyptus is given harmony and a rather melancholy charm.

Max Meldrum, a Scot who reached Australia as a boy, has painted the bush scenery in lower tones than Streeton's "gold and blue," but with dramatic power. His sombre portraits are even more remarkable, and in the school he organised in Melbourne he exercised great influence as a teacher of art of an almost apostolic fervour. Rupert Bunny, who died in 1947, was a highly personal painter whose imaginative nude studies evoke a languorous, sensuous world of innocent pleasure.

By the 1920's, the position of the artist in Australian society was firmly established, though not without controversy as to the merits of particular painters. Artists' societies and academies—the oldest dating from 1856, and most notable the Society of Artists founded in the 1900's—had long existed and flourished vigorously, despite the secessions and re-groupings that always beset such bodies. Galleries of art had been founded in every state, though not all had won support as princely as that which Alfred Felton gave to Melbourne, whose lavish Felton Bequest

## *Their Art*

is the envy even of European galleries and has enriched the Melbourne collection with historic masterpieces. Mr. Sydney Ure Smith, a tireless propagandist for Australian art, was issuing his sumptuous volumes of *Art in Australia*, and had organised the 1923 exhibition of Australian painting at the London Royal Academy. If the 'eighties and 'nineties had been the golden age of achievement, the 1920's were the golden age of prosperity. But before the severe stresses and surprising achievements of more recent decades can be described, some mention must first be made of a category of Australian art that has hitherto been omitted altogether.

Thousands of years before Sydney Parkinson disembarked from the *Endeavour*—how many thousands no authority seems to be absolutely sure—the Aboriginal inhabitants of what is now North Kimberley had painted on rock shelters the mysterious "wondjina" figures which were first discovered by Sir George Grey in 1837. The "wondjinas," clearly derived from the human form but not portrayed in a naturalistic way, are painted in bright red, black and white, with large black ovals for the eyes, a black spot for the nose—and no mouths. Their limbs are rudimentary, and they may have four or three fingers or none at all. Although the present descendants of these ancient artists are vague, even secretive, as to their meaning—for they are still the object of religious practices—it is thought that the "wondjinas" represent the Power that makes rain; and that by painting them, and then repainting them as occasion demanded, the Aborigines assured themselves plentiful supplies of precious water.

Farther south, in Central Australia and Victoria, are found rock engravings of a different kind. These are incised on flat horizontal rock surfaces, and they portray, in a vivid and quite recognisably naturalistic fashion, human beings, kangaroos, emus and fishes, often in groups, and often representing a hunt. Though not so refined as the corresponding Bushman engravings of South Africa, the ancient Australian artists' work is on a larger scale; groups of figures each as big as five feet by twenty are sometimes found—a considerable achievement when one reflects that the native artists, unblessed with hoverplanes, could never have seen the total appearance of the group of figures as a whole. The contemporary natives of Central Australia say these engravings were not even done by their forefathers, but by mythical beings of "the dream-time"—a suggestion which anthropologists are inclined to accept, since there is other evidence to show the earlier presence of different peoples before the ancestors of the present inhabitants arrived.

Another type of Aboriginal art, which has survived into modern



## *The People*

times, is the painting on bark in earth colours—bright red and yellow combined with white and black. Sometimes these, too, are naturalistic—of huntsmen, turtles, crocodiles and so on; sometimes partly abstract—as in the “X-ray” drawings of fish which show their bones and intestines; and sometimes of purely abstract forms. The naturalistic drawings are done for pure enjoyment, or for the instruction of children, while the conventional patterns have a significance as totems which can only be understood by the initiated.

Naturalism and abstraction: these two styles, always present in Aboriginal art from the earliest times, were in the 1930's and '40's, to win adherents among artists of European descent, for it was then that the fresh pictorial innovations of the European continent—particularly Expressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism—were to have their inevitable impact on Australian painters. Among artists who assimilated these discoveries in their own individual ways, the three most outstanding are William Dobell, Russell Drysdale and Margaret Preston.

If an Expressionist is an artist who tells you not only what his subject looks like, but what he strongly feels about what it looks like, then in this sense William Dobell is an Expressionist, and a very powerful one. Often “ugly” in a human sense, his subjects are never ugly in an artistic one because this ungainliness is always transposed by the painter's psychological insight and by his imaginative sense of the dramatic.

Human ugliness has its own mystery, and obese, macabre and repellent as his sitters may sometimes be (like the *Red Lady* or the object of that sinister satire called *The Duchess Disrobes*) his paintings have dignity and beauty. Like all artists of generosity and breadth of vision he is a satirist who, in a great measure, is on the side of his own victims. But small wonder that such disturbing images should have shocked the timid and the conventional, even though their attempt to deprive Dobell of the £500 Archibald Prize (bequeathed by the founder of *The Bulletin*) through a court action in 1944 was as ridiculous as it was petty.

In European Surrealist painting, a frequent device to create the impression of a lonely dream-world is to situate isolated objects in a vast emptiness that recedes, beneath a vacant sky, towards a far distant horizon. Did the innovators who first saw these unearthly visions in Paris studios realise that they were in fact describing, more or less realistically, the actual appearance of some of the desert regions of Australia? It is one of the achievements of Russell Drysdale to have seen this, and to have used the Surrealist devices in a naturalistic way, so that his haunted landscapes evoke the rather terrifying emptiness of the inland

## *Their Art*

deserts: that ancient, hostile aspect of Australian scenery which all visitors must have noticed, though hitherto no painter had captured and tamed its spirit with such power. But in other canvasses, Drysdale's outback scenes—of scorched townships and their queer, laconic inhabitants—are painted in a spirit of affectionate mockery and of fundamental sympathy.

If Margaret Preston, in her bold, lyrical, stylised landscapes, and in her poetical and decorative interpretations of Australian flowers, has learned from European Cubism, she has learned as much from the Aboriginal artists themselves. In her art—to the present writer, the most attractive in modern Australian painting—there is a real fusion of the European and the Aboriginal: a European sense of poetry and style, and an Aboriginal gift for devising convincing abstract forms that have a natural, unforced simplicity. In modern Aboriginal art itself there has as yet been no such synthesis, for while the old style has lingered on in the work of such native painters as Timundu and Papatama, other Aboriginal artists, like Albert Namatjira or Edwin Pareroultja paint brilliant and charming (and extremely popular) pictures in an over-naïve European manner. But this is not the true innocence of experience that is found in Margaret Preston's work.

It will be seen that, through the history of Australian art, the contact with Europe has never been broken; and though for sixty years Australian painting has existed in its own right, its artists have never yielded to the folly of artistic nationalism. Almost all the major painters mentioned here have at some time studied and travelled in Europe. To-day there are as many Australian artists in London and in Paris as there ever have been: Roy de Maistre, one of the few British artists to make effective use of Cubism; Syd Nolan, whose potent, disturbing glimpses of the Australian desert so greatly impressed Londoners a few years ago; Loudon Sainthill, now recognised as one of the major theatrical designers working in England; or Francis Lyburner, whose imaginative paintings *The Quarrel* and *Spring* were the outstanding contribution to the 1953 exhibition of the Australian Artists' Association in London. All these, and many others, continue the tradition of Anglo-Australian effort that dates from the time of the annual dinners for Australian artists in London which Tom Roberts inaugurated at the beginning of the century.

Others, like Donald Friend, whose drawings of the recent war recall the trials and joys of soldiering with realism and humour; or like Douglas Annand, whose water-colours of far regions of his country have a wit

## *The People*

and linear vivacity close to the sensuous art of Dufy—the work of these, and many more, are as yet better known within their native land.

Modern Australian painting has an immense diversity, and so huge and still unfamiliar is the continent that there must be, even now, vast fields for exploration. That is one great advantage which Australian painters have always enjoyed. In Europe, artists are haunted by the illustrious ghosts of centuries, who peer critically over their shoulders as they set out to paint a country that has so often been painted before. Who can look at parts of the English countryside if not partly through Constable's, or through Turner's, eyes? In Australia, despite the work of the pioneers, the painter's vision can be more individual and fresh. For Australian artists, the way is still open for discovery.

## THE PEOPLE VI

---

*Australians also write books, a fact which the British public tacitly admits by buying upwards of a million copies of their work every year. But they are not always aware that the writers are Australians; nor are they aware of a considerable body of Australian writing which has not yet been fully appreciated outside its own country. Indeed, it may be argued that some of the best Australian books have not had the recognition they deserve inside their own country. But that is a point for critics to dispute.*

*As a whole, Australian writers can have no complaint, for their work is bought and read extensively all over the world; while non-Australian writers are often surprised by the astonishing number of their books sold in a country with such a comparatively small population. Australians are ravenous readers, and the British Publishers' Association has good reason to bless a market which has often meant the difference between profit and loss.*

*Dal Stevens, a writer in the direct tradition of Henry Lawson, is best known for his sardonic short stories which appear in many leading British and American magazines, and have been frequently broadcast on the B.B.C. He has published three collections of stories and a richly Australian novel, Jimmy Brockett. His latest book, The Gambling Ghost, is a collection of fantasies and fables.*

# *Their Books*

DAL STIVENS

**A**N AUSTRALIAN writer uses English words (for the most part) as his tools, but not in the same way as an English writer. Our history has been short, but the physical and social environment has worked strongly on our people. We speak differently, have different social attitudes, often look different (Dr. Thomas Wood fancied he detected "the lean Australian mouth"), and even think differently. I am not setting this forward in any mood of assertive self-congratulation: it is simply a fact. A fat mouth might have certain advantages—if only for playing the tuba, and if we thought like some English people then Australian writers might have the sales of Mr. Nevil Shute who can see an Australia which we have not yet discovered.

It is from this starting point of essential differences that I propose to begin this necessarily broad survey of Australian creative writing. The English literary tradition is largely a middle-class one. The Australian literary tradition within which most Australian writers work is, for want of a better term, proletarian. The first is sophisticated, the product of an old and settled society; the second the product of a new country which hammered out a social democracy and where the symbol of the last century might well have been the man who made and lost three fortunes in a lifetime, or the station-hand who ended up by owning the property and employing his former boss, or more pertinently, two mates carrying their swags in the outback and sharing their last plug of tobacco.

It wasn't rough and tumble pioneering in Australia at first. The Australia of the first thirty or forty years of settlement was a relatively static society on the English model. The former officers of the New South Wales Corps and wealthy settlers from the United Kingdom pioneered without too many tears. Large grants of land were made to them and labour (assigned convicts) was cheap. They lived much as country gentlemen in England had lived. Thus a Scottish visitor, John Hood, could write of a visit to John Macarthur's Camden estate in 1841:

"I have passed a most delightful day at C——; a more agreeable

## *Their Books*

English-looking place I have not seen. The house, the park, the water, the gardens, the style of everything and of every person, master and servants, resembled so much what one meets in the old country, that I could scarcely believe myself sixteen thousand miles from it."

Those who came after the first wave however, found it harder. The easily accessible land had gone and there were no convict servants. But men, and their wives and children, came—from the complex of motives that men have, for greed, for a place of their own, for freedom, because of discontent with the old world.

They loaded up their drays and with their wives and children and their stock headed into the unknown. Many sank their all in their gear and there was no turning back. They went on, on, until no other settler was to the west of them and there they squatted and made their home. Those who succeeded lived hard at first, in a hut of split slabs or wattle-and-daub. In comfort there was little difference between master and men. In these beginnings the Australian sentiment of egalitarianism that still endures was born.

And for what some of these men dreamt one turns to a rich Australian novel about the pioneer days—to Miss Miles Franklin's *All That Swagger* and her lovable Danny Delacy from County Clare who settled on the bunyip-haunted Murrumbidgee River and tamed the land and brought up sons and daughters and died rich in the honours in men's hearts, in the legends men told of his brotherhood with all men, white, black, Chinese, old lag, and English gentleman.

"I'm free meself and would wish every man-jack, black and white, to be the same—acquill before his Maker," said Danny once.

"In attacking with single-handed hardihood, the wilderness beyond the fringe of the transplanted squirearchy, Delacy was a symbol and a portent of an Australia which still pecks at its shell a hundred years after his arrival," writes Miles Franklin.

"His practice of equality with all men was part of a nation-wide experiment, which, when Delacy was in his grave, was to flower in measures of political freedom and protection for the ordinary man which raised the personnel of the Australian working class to an unprecedented level and then left it shoaled for lack of continuing inspired leadership."

Democracy was stirring in pastoral Australia and the gold rushes of the 'fifties made it a mass movement. Australia was the Promised Land. Men came there with great expectations in their thousands and tens of thousands—not merely the poor but all those who felt the old world offered no place for them or their ideals.

## *The People*

Not many found their fortune. The alluvial gold was soon won so they sought land. But it was locked against them by men who held leases of vast runs at peppercorn rentals. Great political battles were fought in Australia over the next forty years—for land for farmers, for votes for all (including women), for free education, for tariffs to help Australian manufacturers, for social services, for equitable wages and conditions. Not all the ferment was utilitarian, as Professor R. M. Crawford points out in his book *Australia*:

"The 'fifties were years of great cultural enthusiasm. In 1850, New South Wales established the first Australian University with the liberal provision to enable the talented sons of poor parents to enter it. If Wentworth, its main founder, believed in aristocracy, he also believed in the right of worth and talent to graduate into it.

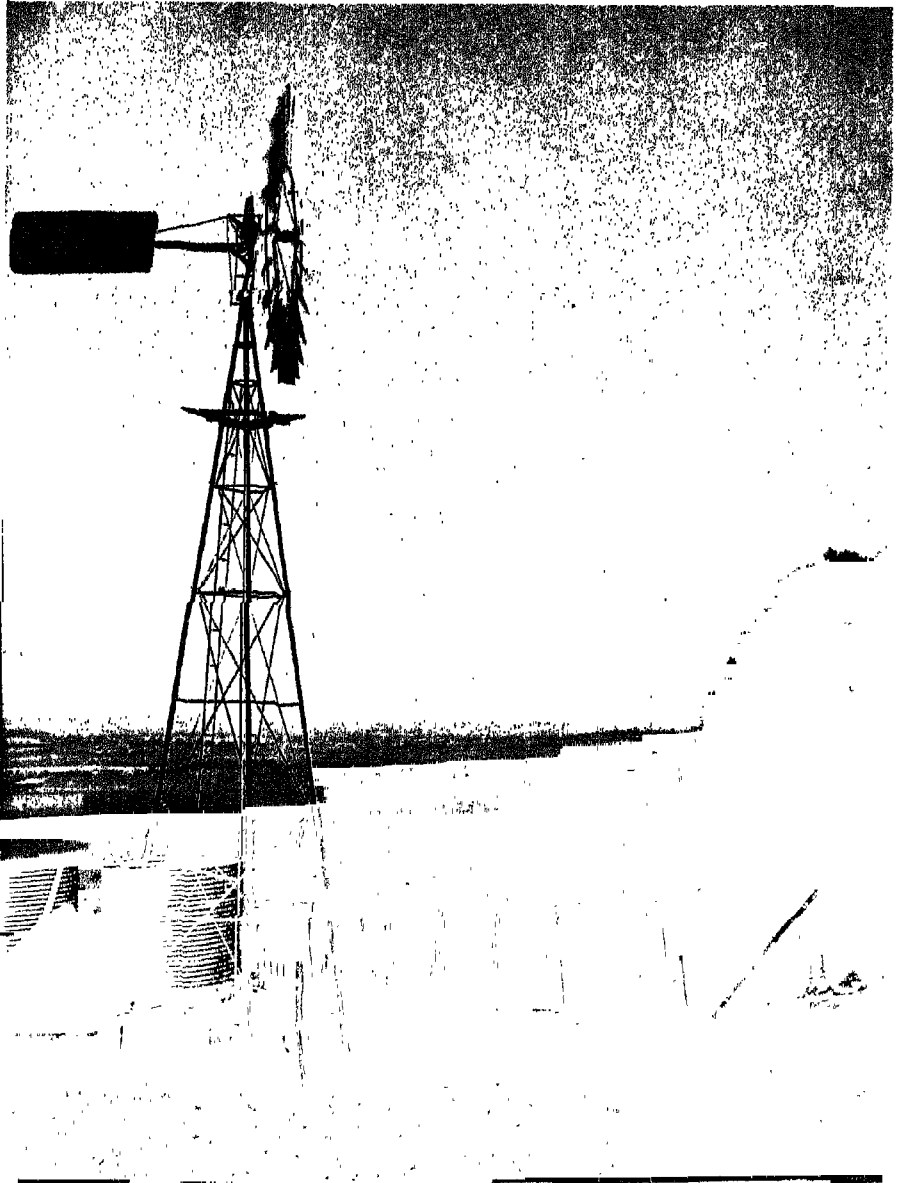
"In the midst of the turmoil of the gold-rushes, Victoria rapidly created a university, a public library, an art gallery and a museum, while the intellectual thirst of colonists in several colonies was seen in the creation of mutual improvement societies, philosophical societies and institutions for the advancement of science."

Pioneer society was a levelling up society. It levelled out the old classes that had existed in Britain. They couldn't very well be maintained when you might have to fight a bush-fire alongside your neighbour or his wife might succour yours in sickness or childbirth when you were miles away from doctors or hospitals; when the test of your worth might be what kind of a mate you were. "Mateship" is a key word in the understanding of the Australian group mind.

Pioneer society was also an aspiring society. "Communism is just being mates," wrote William Lane, a socialist editor of the 'nineties. A bit naïve perhaps, but it was a nice idea.

"(Australia) is committed to no usages of petrified injustice," wrote one of our first novelists, Joseph Furphy; "she is clogged by no fealty to shadowy idols, enshrined by ignorance, and upheld by misplaced homage alone; she is cursed by no memories of fanaticism and persecution; she is innocent of hereditary national jealousy and free from the envy of sister states."

It was a brave statement even if it was over simple. Time was to show that we all belonged to one world, that we could not escape world depressions and world wars, and that we could not create a culture without some debt to Europe, but it seemed very far away then. These men had the optimism of the Victorians (who seem naïve to us, too) augmented by their circumstances. The aspiring Australians had started (they thought)



---

*WINDMILLS AND FLAT HORIZONS—a typical Australian country scene. These are the rich, black soil plains of Queensland's Darling Downs*



# GOLDEN CASKET

Qld Housing Commission



BRISBANE IN SUMMER: the men in shirt sleeves, the women in cotton frocks.  
Proceeds from the state lottery build and maintain the hospitals

## *Their Books*

with the slate wiped clean. They would write a new kind of society on it. It might be each for himself in the old world but here they would stand by each other and help the weaker brother.

It would be fair shares and equal opportunity for all. Whatever that might mean in other countries, in Australia it was tied up with their individualism. Australians were sturdily independent. They or their fathers had come to Australia to be free. Even more important, their environment made them self-reliant. They had to make decisions and rely on themselves. "Give it a go," is a key Australian phrase and so is "make do." The last is both a virtue and a defect. It was admirable for a pioneer to use a sapling to replace a broken spoke in a sulky when the nearest blacksmith was one hundred or even two hundred miles away. It can sometimes lead to the acceptance of the commonplace, to putting up with the second best.

It was against this background that an indigenous Australian literary tradition developed in the 'eighties and 'nineties. It was something they had to create with almost no help from outside. If writers were to interpret what the majority of their fellows felt about themselves and their country, and if their fellows felt they were mates or brothers and not working class and middle class and the rest, then the old middle-class tradition of English literature was unsuitable for their purpose. I am indebted to a sharp-eyed Australian critic, Mr. Arthur Phillips, for this pertinent observation.

English writers had written chiefly about sophisticated and articulate people. A few writers had written about the working class but mainly from the outside. But these Australians, most of the 3,500,000 of them at the turn of the century, were working class and brothers—or fancied they were. And they were inarticulate and not self-conscious.

Australian writers had to find a new way of handling fresh material and in the solution they achieved a minor revolution in Anglo-Saxon prose; in Mr. Phillips's words, "Almost for the first time, fiction in our language has abandoned a middle-class attitude." To spur them in their endeavours, these new writers for a new audience had a weekly periodical, *The Bulletin*, to publish what they wrote, and Australian publishers to sell their books.

Among a number of short story writers was one master, Henry Lawson (1867-1922). I think he learned a little technically from Bret Harte but the rest was his own work, from his generous heart and his vision of Australia. He had things he wanted to say about the brotherhood of man he saw around him. So he used the slightest of plots.

## *The People*

because anything else would have got in the way, much as Chekhov did, and if you want labels for such delicate matters he was writing proletarian stories long before the middle-class writers of the 'thirties.

The keynote of such work is simplicity—which the ingenuous may think comes from artlessness. In Lawson it comes from depth of feeling and unremitting search for the right word.

I cannot quote you a full story, but you will get the flavour of his gently sardonic and *Australian* humour in these excerpts from his early sketch, *The Union Buries Its Dead*. A stranger, with a union card among his effects has been drowned in the outback:

The procession numbered fifteen, fourteen souls following the broken shell of a soul. Perhaps not one of the fourteen possessed a soul any more than the corpse did—but that doesn't matter.

Four or five of the funeral, who were boarders at the pub, borrowed a trap which the landlord used to carry passengers to and from the railway station. They were strangers to us who were on foot, and we to them. We were all strangers to the corpse.

A horseman, who looked like a drover just returned from a big trip, dropped into our dusty wake and followed us a few hundred yards, dragging his packhorse behind him, but a friend made wild and demonstrative signals from an hotel veranda—hooking at the air in front with his right hand and jabbing his left thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the bar—so the drover hauled off and didn't catch us up any more. He was a stranger to the entire show.

We walked in twos. There were three twos. It was very hot and dusty; the heat rushed in fierce dazzling rays across every iron roof and light-coloured wall that was turned to the sun. One or two pubs closed respectfully until we got past. They closed their bar doors and the patrons went in and out through some side or back entrance for a few minutes. Bushmen seldom grumble at an inconvenience of this sort when it is caused by a funeral. They have too much respect for the dead. . . .

The grave looked very narrow under the coffin, and I drew a breath of relief when the box slid easily down. I saw a coffin get stuck once, at Rookwood, and it had to be yanked out with difficulty, and laid on the sods at the feet of the heart-broken relations, who howled dismally while the grave-diggers widened the hole. But they don't cut contracts so fine in the West. Our grave-digger was not altogether bowelless, and, out of respect for that human quality described as "feelin's" he scraped up some light and dusty soil and threw it down

## *Their Books*

to deaden the fall of the clay lumps on the coffin. He also tried to steer the first few shovelfuls gently down against the end of the grave with the back of the shovel turned outwards, but the hard, dry Darling River clods rebounded and knocked all the same. It didn't matter much—nothing does. The fall of lumps of clay on a stranger's coffin doesn't sound any different from the fall of the same things on an ordinary wooden box—at least I didn't notice anything awesome or unusual in the sound; but, perhaps, one of us—the most sensitive—might have been impressed by being reminded of a burial of long ago, when the thump of every sod jolted his heart.

I have left out the wattle—because it wasn't there. I have also neglected to mention the heart-broken old mate, with his grizzled head bowed and great pearly drops streaming down his rugged cheeks. He was absent—he was probably "outback." For similar reasons I have omitted reference to the suspicious moisture in the eyes of a bearded bush ruffian named Bill. Bill failed to turn up, and the only moisture was that which was induced by the heat. I have left out the "sad Australian sunset," because the sun was not going down at the time. The burial took place exactly at midday. . . .

Lawson spoke for a nation. Even now most Australians are familiar with his best tales. There were other story writers in the 'nineties and at the turn of the century with the same casual, leaning-against-a-fence approach: "Steele Rudd" (Arthur H. Davis, 1868-1935), Edward Dyson (1865-1913), Randolph Bedford (1868-1941), Louis Becke (George Lewis Becke, 1855-1913), and Barbara Baynton (1862-1929). Mrs. Baynton was a writer of greater power than Lawson but narrower in her range.

Writers took the homespun bush ballad of the camp fires and made it literary, among them A. B. ("Banjo") Paterson (1864-1941), and Henry Lawson, though the somewhat unsubtle and hearty medium did not suit his talent. There were poets, too, but of them I shall have more to say later.

None of the early novelists quite achieved the success of the story writers in writing for a society that had done away with classes—or imagined it had. Rolf Boldrewood (T. A. Browne, 1826-1915), however, pointed the way in his bushranging novel, *Robbery under Arms* (1888). His writing was idiomatic and direct. Joseph Furphy (1843-1912) called his one big picaresque novel *Such Is Life* and wrote it (he said) by filling out the entries in the diary of his life in the bush. He put his tongue in his cheek and asserted that life had no form of the

## *The People*

kind employed by novelists such as Henry Kingsley, but was as casual and shapeless as his book. Such is life.

It was published in 1903 in *The Bulletin*, in abridged form. It is only now we have woken up to the fact that Furphy was pulling our legs and that far from being formless, *Such Is Life* is most subtly and intricately plotted. It is a masterpiece, uneven, rather like the curate's egg—superior grade.

Furphy described his novel, sprawling as the Murray and its tributaries, as "temper democratic; bias, offensively Australian." It was a stand that needed taking then; it is not so necessary now.

I have stayed rather long in the 'nineties because I have wanted to show where Australian writing started to be different and Australian, and why it is still different to-day though we Australians are no longer foolish enough to think of ourselves as brothers or to think that communism is just being mates or that our land flows with milk and honey. The writers of the 'nineties helped to mould what we were to think about ourselves as a people; and whether what they wrote was truth or fiction, a legend once established is a powerful thing.

From Lawson and Furphy and the lesser writers, too, has stemmed the most powerful influence in contemporary Australian writing. It has affected almost every novelist and story writer that came afterwards.

Australia changed gradually. The old bush life disappeared and somehow some men got richer than others and became middle class; men battling in the bush became farmers and graziers with big runs; we built cities and factories; and before we knew where we were, the typical Australian was not to be found in the bush but on a clerk's stool or watching a machine in a factory.

But being conservative people, in spite of all that outsiders might think, we went on acting a little as though we had only to walk out of our office and mount a horse or shoulder our swag and head along the track. And we went on believing in giving people a fair go (provided it didn't hurt us too much) and maintaining the fiction that all men were brothers and social equals. We took it a little too far sometimes and said all men had equal talents; and we sometimes thought we could get along without the exceptional man, or if he was obstinate and persisted in being brilliant, then we made things awkward for him.

Just what would have happened to the development of our literature in the first two or three decades of this century if we had been left alone we can only guess at. The old unity that had given us story writers and poets broke up, and British publishers took a hand. They discovered

## *Their Books*

that light popular fiction would sell not merely in the United Kingdom but in the Empire as well. In the flood of commodity fiction, Australian writing got swamped. No longer could an Australian writer have a broad mass audience as Lawson had had or as A. B. ("Banjo") Paterson had had with his ballads.

There were now two kinds of writing in Australia: trade goods (in competition with the imported) and creative writing.

But the creative writers went on writing—for audiences of the discriminating kind rather than for the many. There was Louis Stone (1871-1935) with his racy story *Jonah* (1911) of Sydney larrikins and their "pushes." There was another who was to have a very important effect on all future Australian novelists, Henry Handel Richardson (Mrs. J. G. Robertson, 1870-1946). Her great trilogy *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, published in three parts in 1917, 1925, and 1929, showed that Australian life could be material for a great tragic novel. Henry Handel Richardson had accepted her material unselfconsciously. She was not trying to be Australian or anything else. She had a story to tell about something that had stirred her.

Her central figure, Richard Mahony, was a tender-spirited man who could not cope with the toughness of Australian frontier life when "Jack was as good as his master but more so." That at least is the surface structure of the story. But Mahony was basically self-destroyed as Hamlet was. Mahony would have come to grief in any society. He fails to make a do of it in both Australia and England (this is a great comfort to us) and as his creator said of him, "he was never once equal to it (the demands of life)."

Other novelists followed where Henry Handel Richardson pointed the way. William Saroyan has said of Sherwood Anderson, "We American writers are all his collaborators." Many Australian writers might as truthfully assert they are collaborators of Henry Handel Richardson and of Henry Lawson.

Two other novelists who took their material unselfconsciously were Katharine Susannah Prichard, *Working Bullocks* (1926), *Coonardoo* (1929), *Haxby's Circus* (1930); and Vance Palmer, *The Passage* (1930), *The Swayne Family* (1934). The change that had taken place was best shown in Miss Prichard's novel *Coonardoo*; she took you inside the minds of the Aborigines and showed them to be people, whereas an earlier writer might have been tempted to treat them as quaint props.

Norman Lindsay wrote a novel, *Redheap* (1930), and told the truth about a Victorian town as he saw it, and as Rabelais might have seen it.

## *The People*

The Australian Customs banned the novel. We had done away with many of the ideas of the old world—including liberalism.

The absurdities of Australian censorship puzzle outsiders but need not. Many Australians are descendants of men and women who had come to Australia because they felt they suffered economic as well as religious disabilities in England and Ireland where they did not belong to the Established Church. They lived austere lives and were pure, and were convinced that temptation must not be put in the way of others. To make things safe, they banned James Joyce's *Ulysses* and other works, and (for a time) *All Passion Spent* by V. Sackville-West because it had been entered on the Customs lists as *All Passion* and a clerk with commendable zeal banned it. It was no argument to say he knew nothing about literature. He knew smut when he thought he saw it.

It is some consolation that the more fantastic illiberalities have been eased in recent years. Liberalism is a notion we cannot do without.

Australian novelists explored the past, ignoring the more dismal of the academics who asserted that Australia had no history and could, therefore, have no literature.

Some sensed only the novelties. Others with more insight were fascinated at discovering themselves Australians. They wanted to discover what they were and why they were . . . well, different. So they wrote of the early days; of the Sydney of Governor Bligh; of the pioneers who headed into the unknown, in the tracks of the explorers, following the tree blazes before they had healed; of the men and women in whose hearts a tug-of-war between the fields of England and harsh paddocks of Australia was fought.

Among the more notable of these novels were Martin Boyd's witty, mannered family chronicle of *The Montforts* (1928); M. Barnard Eldershaw's story of Quartermaster James Hyde who energetically founded a great business in early Sydney, *A House Is Built* (1929); Brent of Bin Bin's linked ebullient stories of pioneer squatters in southern New South Wales, *Up The Country* (1928) and *Ten Creeks Run* (1930); Brian Penton's bold tales of Queensland pioneering, slapped on with a palette knife, *Landtakers* (1934) and *Inheritors* (1936); Miles Franklin's sparkling *All That Swagger* (1937) which I have briefly mentioned earlier; and Eleanor Dark's imaginative reconstruction of the first days of settlement, *The Timeless Land* (1941).

Novelists wrote, too, of contemporary life, among them Eleanor Dark with a series of novels, marked by acute insight into character, that include *Prelude to Christopher* (1933), *Sun Across The Sky* (1937) and

## *Their Books*

*Waterway* (1938). Seaforth Mackenzie published two introverted poetical novels, *The Young Desire It* (1937) and *Chosen People* (1938). Patrick White wrote of the people of a little mountain town, *Happy Valley* (1939), adapting to his ends some of the technical devices of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. White's title was ironic. Vance Palmer, quietly professional, wrote of a North Queensland town's tensions in *Cyclone* (1947) and the rise and fall of a silver-lead town, *Golconda* (1948). Norman Lindsay wrote a comic masterpiece of Australian boyhood, *Saturdee* (1933),—a tale to be set alongside Mark Twain's. Frank Dalby Davison published *Man-Shy* in 1931, a tender evocative nature story of a bush-bred heifer.

Australian thinking in the first three decades of this century had been exuberantly optimistic. Men would be (or were already) brothers, the land was rich and would feed 100 million Australians, all tall, sun-tanned, fearless, and each everybody's equal; men might starve but only in the old world: Australia had the secret of the good life. Then came the depression of the 'thirties.

At the end of the 'thirties and the years that followed came a crop of novels that asked questions about Australian society, or, more forthrightly denounced it. Kylie Tennant, a vigorous earthy writer, wrote of the under-privileged in *Tiburon* (1935) and *The Battlers* (1941). Xavier Herbert wrote of the Northern Territory in *Capricornia* (1938) where, as he saw it, the white man's burden rested most heavily on the Aborigines, detribalised and debased; it was a blistering, scarifying book, written at white heat and with immense power, rich in wit and allegory, overwhelming in its horror—perhaps the one truly unforgettable Australian novel of recent years; certainly the Territory will not forget it in a hurry. Leonard Mann wrote (his pulse less rapid than Herbert's) of life in a decaying mining town, *Mountain Flat* (1939) and of shady business in Melbourne, *The Go-Getter* (1942). In *Tomorrow and Tomorrow* (1947) M. Barnard Eldershaw (Miss Marjorie Barnard and Miss Flora Eldershaw) set a story four hundred years ahead in time when the present-day Australians had gone down before an Asiatic race and been merged with their conquerors, and Sydney lies in ruins and abandoned. From this perspective, the authors looked back (through their central character, a novelist) to the Australia of to-day.

In the 'forties Australian novelists increasingly set their books in cities, among them Eleanor Dark, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Kylie Tennant, Leonard Mann, Vance Palmer, Dymphna Cusack, Frank Hardy and Robert Close.



## *The People*

All novelists I have mentioned have been in the tradition of realism, stemming from the writers of the 'nineties. But other novelists had emerged who obstinately went their own way and were not concerned with either the social novel or the novel of character. It was not that they did not share the "Utopianism" of Australian attitudes. They may have shared them or rejected them. Either way it did not matter. They had other and more compelling interests—some wishing to penetrate deeply into the human heart and the mystery of man's life, and others, more simply, to set down a highly individual vision.

There was, first, *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1874) by Marcus Clarke (1846-1881), a story about the harsher aspects of the convict system in Tasmania. Few books can have been more discussed on grounds other than right ones than this melancholy masterpiece—a novel of protest, a cry from the heart against man's inhumanity to man, a great singing soaring book that carries the echoes of the revolutionary mood of the novelists and poets at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

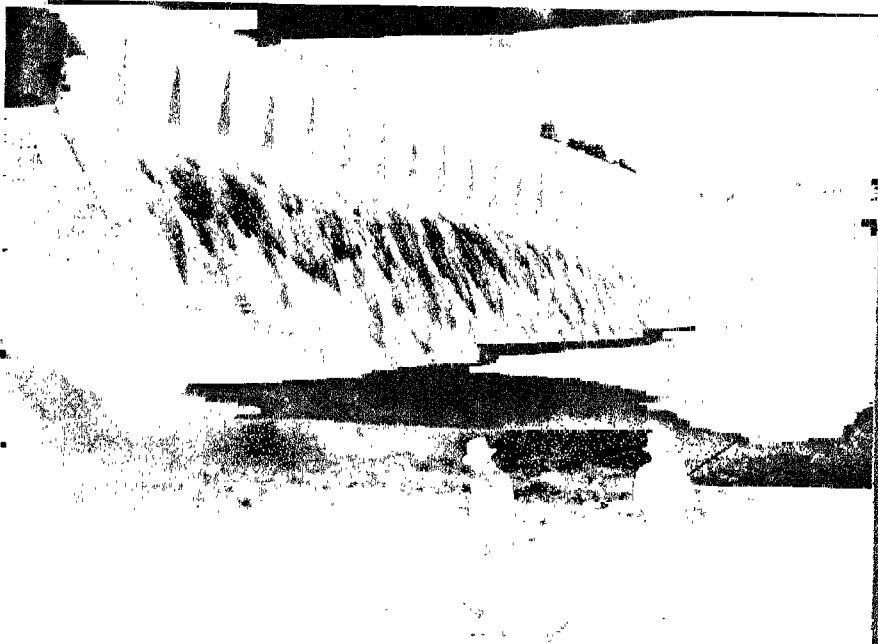
There was also a neglected master, William Gosse Hay (1857-1945) who wrote five novels around the convict system. But the portrayal of convictism itself was merely a means and not an end with Hay. He wanted to show the conflict within the souls of men and the symbolical echoes he struck off have affinities with Dostoevsky. His greatest book, *The Escape of Sir William Hearn* (1918), and *Captain Quadring* (1912) should be reprinted.

Another outside the main stream was Christina Stead, a passionate, dedicated writer with a coruscating style, who has produced a cluster of psychological novels that includes *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* (1934), *The Man Who Loved Children* (1941), *For Love Alone* (1944) and *Letty Fox: Her Love* (1947).

Cecil Mann's lyrical *Light In The Valley* (1947), Eve Langley's impetuous *The Pea Pickers* (1942), Brian Elliott's novel of ideas, *Leviathan's Inch* (1946) were other books outside the broad stream.

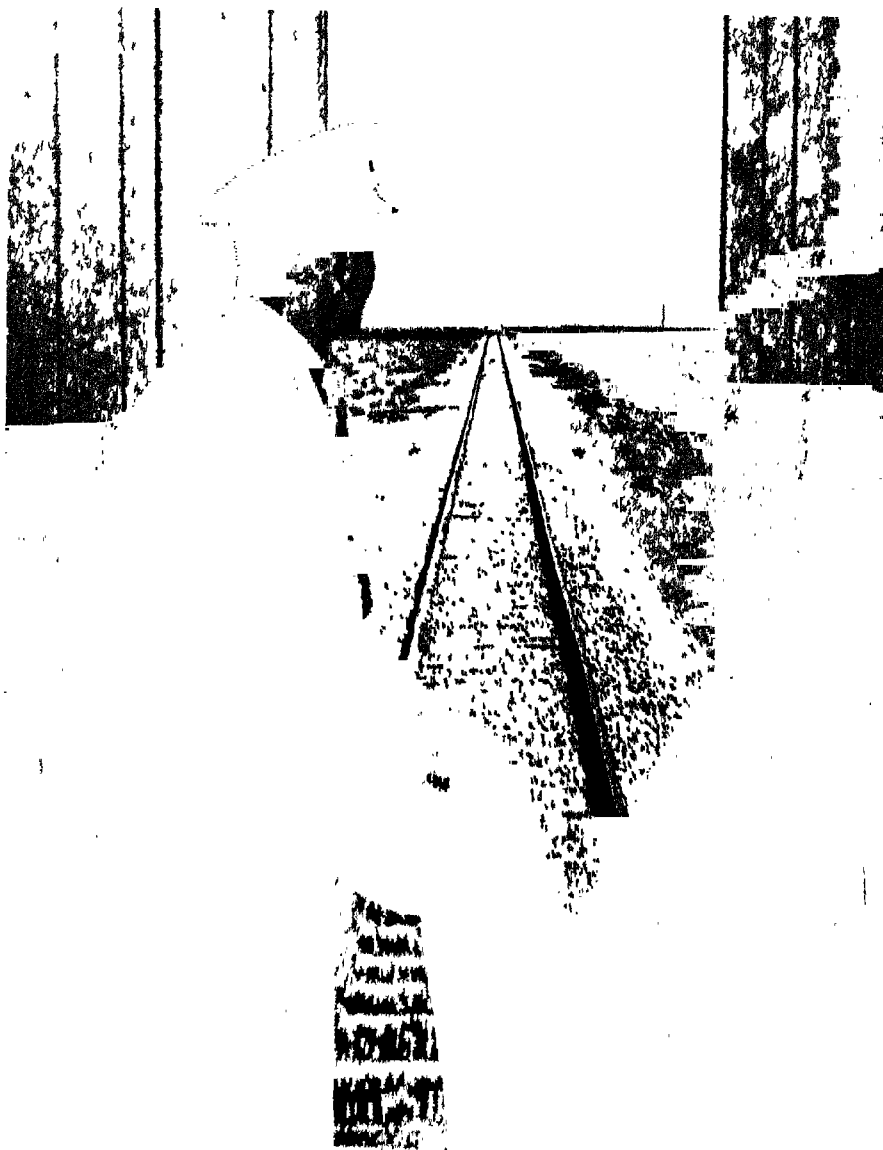
Since Lawson's day other story writers have come to the fore: Vance Palmer, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Frank Dalby Davison, Gavin Casey, "Brian James" (Brian James Tierney), Alan Marshall, Marjorie Barnard, Cecil Mann, Margaret Trist and Douglas Stewart have all published collections.

I have not space to discuss their work individually but almost all, no matter how they differ one from the other, have an indigenous laconic flavour. They are as Australian as the platypus, though their stories



*WATER is Australia's greatest problem. The Hume Weir, in N.S.W., conserves it ; the scene below typifies the nation's recurrent tragic droughts*





---

BETWEEN PERTH AND ADELAIDE *the railway runs for 300 miles without a bend*  
*—the world's longest stretch of straight line*

## *Their Books*

might be enjoyed equally in South Kensington or Kenya. Almost all of them do their best work in the humorous story, speaking out of the corners of their mouths in that quietly sardonic way which I feel is so very Australian. It is an attitude to life which will make an Australian describe a man in a frenzy of rage as "performing" and tell another that things are not so dusty when they are really very good. It is an attitude, too, which will make an Australian tell a story against himself and practise under-statement to the extent of calling a rain forest, with trees 200-250 feet high, a "brush."

In the natural elation of discovering themselves to be Australians with their own attitudes, Australian novelists and story writers have tended to be somewhat extroverted, concerned mainly with social forces and action rather than with things of the spirit. It is in that sense pragmatic, even political writing. Australia's history has been concerned chiefly with material advancement, in achieving a high standard of living and of social services.

Pessimism has been a persistent theme in recent prose writing. Lawson's work was often melancholic but it was distanced and offset by his humour. Our vast and difficult land has perhaps accentuated man's inherent feeling of impotence. Only too often our novels and stories are concerned with frustration and our writers bogged down in pedestrian realism.

If I may hazard a personal opinion, prose writing in Australia is marking time. The rich lode which has been uncovered must be worked now in new ways. Where prose may wing is foreshadowed, I think, in the verse now being written in Australia. Poetry is often prose's John the Baptist; the yeast stirs there first and in Australia it effervesces towards wit, gaiety and legend. The work being done in Australian verse leads you to expect big things in the future.

You will remember how the Australians at the end of the last century thought they were all mates and that socialism was just around the corner and that they had done away with the old sores of Europe, and that they found prose writers such as Lawson and ballad writers such as Paterson to speak for them and utter what there was in their hearts.

Writing at the same time but in more obscurity were lyric poets, odd people who got excited at the wonder of a flower, or a stumbling bee, an exotic rainbow or at just being alive. There were a number of them but three I think noteworthy were Shaw Neilson (1872-1942), Hugh McCrac, and Dame Mary Gilmore. The last two are still writing verse of distinction. "Furnley Maurice" (Frank Wilmot, 1881-1942)

## *The People*

was sharper tongued and turned from the lyric to social satire for which he will be remembered.

What Cyril Connolly would call a mandarin strain has always persisted in Australian literature. It was in the novels of William Gosse Hay. It has been particularly marked in our poets. Not nearly enough critical attention has been paid to it. It has been overlooked in the concentration on what within limits is a healthy interest in Australian regionalism but which at extremes is a billabong-pump form of provincialism that can lead to praise of a work merely because it is Australian. And it can lead to the fallacy that if you put it all down, then art will somehow creep in.

If one were to stake out a cautious claim that perhaps ten Australian writers had achieved world stature, then six or seven of these places would go to poets—and most of them to the mandarins; to, perhaps Bernard O'Dowd (1866-1953), Christopher Brennan (1870-1932), William Baylebridge (William Blocksidge 1883-1942), Robert D. FitzGerald, Kenneth Slessor and Judith Wright.

It is one of the little oddities of the modern movement in English verse that one of its pioneers should have been a don at the University of Sydney—Christopher Brennan, perhaps the greatest of Australian poets. A classical scholar who quickened to the symbolism of Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, Brennan wrote verse of a noble if sometimes turgid sonority.

He has had no literary progeny and neither, for that matter, have Baylebridge or O'Dowd. All three were, perhaps, too personal and individual—Brennan with his dark symphonic music, Baylebridge with his subjective metaphysic and vision of love, and O'Dowd with his clanging patriotism.

Australia's poetic progeny have sprung mainly from the two later poets, Kenneth Slessor and Robert D. FitzGerald. Both have been preoccupied with time and with legend; both have sought to impose a vision on the past.

Kenneth Slessor's first collection *Cuckooz Contrey* appeared in 1932 with its kindling "Five Visions of Captain Cook" which released younger tongue-tied poets and stirred their interest in legend; to be followed by *Five Bells* (1939) and *100 Poems* (1944). Slessor is a goldsmith with words, but one with wry or tragic undertones. For many, *Five Bells*, a heart-stopping, tender elegy for a drowned friend, remains his best poem.

Robert FitzGerald has published *To Meet The Sun* (1929), *Moonlight*

## *Their Books*

*Acre* (1938) and *Between Two Tides* (1952). FitzGerald is a sparer, more sinewy poet than Slessor, of greater intellectual grasp. In recent years he has turned to long dramatic poems, taking us in *Fifth Day* into the mind of Warren Hastings on trial and in *Heemskerck Shoals* into that of Tasman.

Linked with the interest in history and legend in contemporary Australian verse is a concern with the lyric and a swing towards gaiety and exuberance, shading from humour through wit and satire.

A poet who embraces all three—legend, song and gaiety—is Douglas Stewart. He has written verse plays, *Ned Kelly* and *Fire on the Snow* (about Scott's heroic South Pole expedition), a long ballad sequence, *Glencoe* (1947) and many short ballads, lyrics and short stories.

Francis Webb and William Hart-Smith are two other poets who are interested in legend. When he was twenty-three, Francis Webb published *A Drum For Ben Boyd*, a brilliant long narrative poem about the ex-convict adventurer Ben Boyd who made a fortune from trading. It was a startling performance, or would have been if we did not know that no one except savages nowadays get startled by poetry. He has fulfilled his promise with his new long narrative poem, *Leichardt In Theatre* (1952), an evocation of the ill-starred explorer.

You will perhaps have noticed how frequently Australian poets write about the sea finding in the stories of the early seafarers a symbol that expresses their own feelings about their country and about life. I emphasise the last because the best Australian writers (our poets) are looking out as well as inward. They have renounced backyards and billabongs as things in themselves.

Perhaps the finest lyric poet in Australia to-day is Judith Wright. She is a poet of impassioned feeling and tingling imagery. She has published *The Moving Image* (1946) and *Woman To Man* (1949). Here is her poem, *Bullocky*, where the old world and the new merge together in her vision:

Beside his heavy-shouldered team,  
thirsty with drought and chilled with rain,  
he weathered all the striding years  
till they ran widdershins in his brain:

Till the long solitary tracks  
etched deeper with each lurching load  
were populous before his eyes,  
and fiends and angels used his road.

## *The People*

All the long straining journey grew  
a mad apocalyptic dream,  
and he old Moses, and the slaves  
his suffering and stubborn team.

Then in his evening camp beneath  
the half-light pillars of the trees  
he filled the steeped cone of night  
with shouted prayers and prophecies.

While past the camp fire's crimson ring  
and star-stuck darkness cupped him round,  
and centuries of cattlebells  
rang with their sweet uneasy sound.

Grass is across the waggon-tracks,  
and plough strikes bone beneath the grass,  
and vineyards cover all the slopes  
where the dead teams were used to pass.

O vine, grow close upon that bone  
and hold it with your rooted hand.  
The prophet Moses feeds the grape,  
and fruitful is the Promised Land.

Poets are the antennae of literature; they sense the currents first, or possibly they can give expression to them a little earlier than the prose writer can. A prose writer generally matures later.

Among the more mettlesome newer poets are Peter Hopegood, David Campbell, James McAuley, Harold Stewart and A. D. Hope. The last three are often satirists and, with their interest in the great classical myths, bring a healthy cosmopolitan air to offset that sometimes overpowering smell of gum blossom.

One could single out names in drama but so far our contributions have not been notable, except possibly in broadcast drama. Stage writers have almost no outlets in Australia where a commercial monopoly generally follows the more undistinguished West End and Broadway successes. There is some hope for the future: in the promise of Federal Government aid for a national theatre, in the vigorous little theatre movement—and the unstretched talents of some of our playwrights.

## *Their Books*

Among Australian essayists one name is outstanding—that of Walter Murdoch whose persuasive amiability and urbane humour (often cloaking a sting) has won him a reputation overseas as well as in his homeland.

Writers in Australia suffer from some disabilities, not the least of which is that there are only eight and three-quarter million Australians.

There is a certain amount of pessimism in some intellectual circles in Australia—perhaps not unnaturally in a young nation confronted with older and greater cultures. One form this gloom takes is for Australian intellectuals to blame Australia specifically for the ills under which they labour. But, when assessed, most of the ills borne by Australian intellectuals are very similar to those borne by intellectuals in the United Kingdom or anywhere else.

On some counts the intellectual climate is particularly healthy with enlightened Federal and State Governments supporting literature, music and opera. Government aid for the arts no doubt, has its opponents, but its coming has been inevitable ever since the imposition of death duties and the consequent decline in private patronage. Australians almost from the first have sought State aid in many fields. From railways to literature is no odd step, particularly when it is backed by a steadily-growing interest in Australian writing.

The Commonwealth Literary Fund, established by the Australian Government, grants fellowships of £600 a year to a number of proved writers so they can have some economic freedom while they work on a book. It also guarantees Australian publishers against loss on worthwhile books. A criticism that could be made is that the fellowships tend to go to a "safe" writer rather than to the brilliant but uncertain youngster.

Australia has two well-established literary quarterlies, *Meanjin* (the name is aboriginal and is pronounced Me-an-jin), dating from 1940, and *Southerly*, 1939. They serve different needs and are backed to the extent of £400 a year by the Commonwealth Literary Fund. *The Bulletin*, the weekly which introduced Lawson and the other first Australian writers, publishes much verse and many stories.

What of the future of Australian writing? The prospect is very fair indeed. The world of Australian writers is full of wonder and they are excitedly making discoveries about it; from this awe and sense of the miraculous a great literature could emerge.





## THE PEOPLE VII

---

*The Australian accent, distinctive enough in writing, becomes more marked in speech. Several comments have already been made about it in this book, and now the difficult subjects of accent and language in general are handed to an expert for his opinion.*

*They are matters in which most Australians find it hard to be dispassionate, and probably for that reason the two most prominent authorities are both New Zealanders.*

*Our mentor on this occasion was born in New Zealand, although his service in the first world war with the Australian army gave him a vivid acquaintance with the subject. His long list of standard books on aspects of the English language include A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, The World of Words, Usage and Abusage: A Guide to Good English, and many others.*

# *Their Language*

ERIC PARTRIDGE

AUSTRALIANS USE a variation of the language that the non-English speaking world has long agreed to call "English." Like the American "language," it resembles British English at many more points than those at which it differs. Australian and British English are closer to each other than many Australians believe; and far closer than most Britons think.

Admittedly there are differences, which have developed in Australia in much the same way as they have in the other dominions and in the United States. In U.S.A. the admission of millions of Continental Europeans has caused the language to diverge more sharply and more variously than in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. But in all these countries, the language has had the same three stages of development.

At first the settlers spoke the English they had spoken in Britain.

Only with the second generation did differences of accent and intonation, syntax and accident appear to any marked degree and differences of vocabulary become numerous, and for many years the balance between British and Colonial English was held fairly evenly, with the latter slowly yet inevitably growing the stronger.

Once the colonial influence became predominant, and the colonists perceived the predominance, that influence deepened and widened more rapidly than ever before. In the United States, the acceleration began with the signing, in 1776, of the Declaration of Independence; in Australia, with Federation in 1901. In both countries, however, any intelligent observer could, a generation earlier, have read the future, and only a fool would have failed to see the significance and importance of the manner of publication, as of the nature, of Henry Lawson's *Short Stories in Prose and Verse* in 1894.

The history of "the Australian language" was at first synonymous with the history of settlement in Australia, from the arrival of the First Fleet at Botany Bay in 1788. "Life ran thinly in the new world of the

## *Their Language*

south in the years between 1788 and the end of the eighteenth century," writes Sidney J. Baker in that invaluable work, *The Australian Language*. "A few thousand people had been thrown together on the edge of a vast wilderness, before them the Pacific, behind them the grey, bleak unknown. They had scratched a toehold for themselves in a new land, and it was not much more than a toehold—a few huts, barracks for the convicts, the beginnings of cultivation, little else except the forbidding bush that pressed around them . . . Yet out of that small fragment of a colony emerged the first glimpses of a new language."

Strictly, what emerged was a dialect; only in the second phase did that dialect become, in its more educated speakers, a variety of what the philologists call Modified Standard English: in this connection, Standard Australian English.

But Australians have always made far too much of the convict element among the early settlers. Mr. Baker and others have drawn attention to the rather large number of underworld terms that seeped into everyday speech during the first forty years; but the number is proportionately not much larger than in England itself. Language has always in part recruited itself from below as well as from above and, most numerous, from all sides.

No; the most important linguistic feature of the underworld influence in early Australia is not the number of words and phrases it introduced into the staple of Australian speech—hence, though necessarily less, of Australian writing—but the more subtle and more pervasive results of the numerical predominance of convicts, emancipated convicts, and the culturally little superior soldiery and minor officials (such as warders) over the free, non-military, non-official population until about 1830.

As a result, Australian speech and writing have, from the outset, tended to be unconventional. By "unconventional" I am not referring to morals; of all the colonies that became dominions it is probably true that, except perhaps during the first generation, the inhabitants are more "proper," both in speech and in writing, than English men and women. The unconventionality is linguistic. It issues in a freer interpretation and a simpler practice of accidence and syntax, in a readier acceptance of new terms, in a healthy, only very rarely lawless, contempt for the social strata of language, and in a greater facility of metaphor-coining and of word-coining.

Australian English has always been, or striven to become, natural, unaffected, sincere, direct, and therefore, all in all, simple. We clearly

## *The People*

see this tendency in Marcus Clarke, Henry Kendall and T. A. Browne (Rolf Boldrewood); we even detect its beginnings in such English visitors as Wakefield, Cunningham and Henry Kingsley. In Henry Lawson and "Banjo" Paterson, this simplicity, this directness and this naturalness have fully bloomed.

Nor has the bloom they imparted during the last six years of the nineteenth century departed in the twentieth century, although it has, since about 1942, become considerably more sophisticated. Convicts and warders and soldiers, and those genuine as well as those riff-raff adventurers who arrived once free immigration became possible, naturally preferred the direct and the unadorned; often they insisted upon it.

To all such men, the open air connoted freedom; not only the major freedom of free men, a freedom that to most of the early inhabitants formed a mere aspiration, but also the minor and temporary freedom gained by being outside the confines of the barrack-prisons. Life in the open air became gradually a national ideal and a literary fundamental.

Hatred of restraint led to unconventionality: freedom, or the desire of freedom, from restraint influenced not merely vocabulary and style and speech, but also the choice of subjects and the selection of the characters in poetry, in fiction, in newspaper articles. The convict in *For The Term of His Natural Life* differs from the convict—whether "hero" or minor character—in any earlier novel written in English. In a new land, proportions change: men's speech changes: and the writings describing the land and the people inevitably and very rapidly change along with the strange scene, the climate, the entire social background.

Thus we come to what most writers on Australia and, previously, all writers upon "the Australian language" have treated as the earliest and most important factor: the alien soil; the different climate; the strange flora and fauna; even the different geographical and topographical features; the Aborigines; the unaccustomed needs and consequently the new habits and occupations.

Arising from these physical media, and constantly shaped and shaded by them, are the psychological, intellectual and spiritual concomitants: an individuality more rugged than rough, an individuality strong and clear-cut; an independence at once sturdy and manly, self-reliant and self-promoting, courageous and persevering; a quiet, wryly humorous acceptance of the buffetings of fate in the dread form of drought and bush fires, of sudden floods and other unpredictable forces; conversely, a warm appreciation of nature's bounty when bounty it is; a scathing

## *Their Language*

contempt of sham and hypocrisy, of pretence and pretentiousness; an intense dislike of pomposity and protocol; a pride of country more patent yet no less genuine than that of an Englishman or a Scot, a Welshman or an Irishman—pride all the more natural, all the stronger, for being directed at a country that became its inhabitants' homeland "the hard way"; a slightly sardonic humour, natural enough in those who have experienced the sardonicisms of a land often greyly bleak or cruelly bright; a tremendous respect for the first-rate, a sympathy and friendliness towards the second-rate, and impatience with the third-rate; a very marked resourcefulness and adaptability, not only existing among those who, on the land, would probably fail to survive without them but also extending, perhaps as an inherited racial trait, to city dwellers.

Listening to the wind rustling the eucalyptus ("gum trees") and the acacias ("wattles") and sougbing about the surrealist cactus ("prickly pear") and in the mulga grass has refined the national ear. Generations of exposure to the Australian climate have produced great singers and a timbre and accent that somewhat resemble those of South Africa, a country similarly placed geographically.

In what have the physical background, geography and topography of Australian civilisation, the fauna and flora and all that goes with them—in what and to what extent have they influenced the language?

The most obvious influence has been on the vocabulary, with words for every new quadruped, bird, fish, reptile, flower, tree, shrub, grass—such physiographical features as *billabong*, "the *mallee*" and "the *big scrub*"—the Aboriginal (familiarily *Abo*) and words connected with his way of life, e.g. *humpy*, *gunyah*, *mia-mia*, *wurley* (these four words denote a native hut), *waddy* (cudgel: ? pidgin for "wood"), *nulla-nulla*, *boomerang*, *woomera*, *cooe*, *corroboree*, *gin* and *lubra*.

One or other of the Aboriginal dialects has accounted for such Australianisms as:

ANIMAL LIFE: *boomer*, *kangaroo*, *wallaby* and *wallaroo*, *koala*, *bandicoot*, *wombat*, *warrigal* and *dingo*, the fabulous *bunyip*; *kookaburra*, *galah*, *budgerigar*; *dingong*, *yabby*, *burramundi*.

PLANT LIFE: *mulga* and *geebung*, *boobyalla* and *boree*, *kurrajong* and *gidyah*, *coolibah*, *brigalow* and *burrawang*, and several dozen others.

CUSTOMS, HABITS, RITES: *bogle* (to bathe), *bora*, *coolamon*.

MISCELLANEOUS: *billy* (as in *boil the billy*), *dilly*, *jackaroo*, *jumbuck*, *myall*; *pindan*; *wamba*.

## The People

Two or three of those words may have perhaps a European, not an Australian origin; most of those words are very seldom heard outside Australia; nevertheless, all those words form an integral part of the Australian language. The most generally used words refer mostly to the land or to those who, including the Aborigines, are vitally concerned with it.

In the early history of Australia and its language there are several other aspects worth considering; they arise from the life of the pioneers and the gold-diggers, the adventurous farmers and the bushrangers. Among the more notable terms we find *bushranger* itself, with its *ball up* or *stick up*;

*cattle duffing* and *cattle duffer*, *horse duffing*; *duffing yard*, where *duff*, to steal, has been taken over from the speech of the underworld;

*gully-raking* and *scrub-running*, the search, in *gulleys* (gorges and wild valleys) and *scrub* (land covered with thick bushes or even with gum trees), for stock, especially cattle, to steal;

*squatter*; *stockrider*, *stockwhip*, *stockyard*; *runs* or *stations*, for (very) large sheep or cattle farms or ranches, the original forms being *stock-run*, now archaic, or *sheep-run*, still heard occasionally, and *stock(-)station*, now obsolete;

*cockatoo* (farmer), superseded, about 1890, by *cocky*; *selection*, a small farm in a district thrown open by the Government; the *back-blocks*, district(s) remote from the amenities of urban civilisation; *the never-never land* or *country*, usually *the never-never*, back of beyond;

*creek*, a brook or a stream larger than a brook, yet smaller than a river—a usage very common also in Canada and the United States, and fairly common in New Zealand;

*the bush*, scrub-grown country, hence loosely, among city-dwellers only, any farming district; *to be bushed* or *lost*; *bush-whacker*, colloquial for a *bushman*, who lives in *the bush*; *bush telegraph*, the means whereby bushrangers kept themselves well informed, hence the spreading of news and rumours, but also a synonym of "the grapevine";

*paddock*, a field of any size up to 50,000 acres or so;

*jackaroo*, a tenderfoot station-hand, hence any station-hand, may have been an Aboriginal word but more probably blends the *Jack* of *Jacky* (or *Johnny*) *Raw*, a newcomer, with (kang)aroo; *roustabout*, a handyman on a station, especially in the *woolshed* (shearing-shed) for the *ringers* (fastest shearers) and would-be ringers;

*bullocky*, a bullock-driver; *clearskins* or *cleanskins*, unbranded cattle; *poddy* (-calf), a calf just taken from its mother; *ropeable*, applied to cattle

## *Their Language*

that are controllable only with a rope, hence slangily to persons extremely angry;

(of a horse) to *buck*, hence *buck-jumping*; *brumby*, a horse born or become wild and living untamed, either from a horsebreeder named Brumby or from a Queensland Aboriginal *boorambie* or *baroombie* (the one being a metathesis of the other);

*boundary-riders* and *overlanders*, the latter conducting stock for great distances, shorter distances being covered by drovers—a distinction that cannot be pressed very closely;

the *swagman*, colloquially *swaggie*, is also called a *sundowner*, because this species of tramp tries, usually with success, to reach a station at or about sunset, although the latter term, as in Jon Cleary's *The Sundowners*, has latterly been applied also to such a shearer or station-hand or general handyman as travels about the country and sleeps usually in a tent.

Gold-digging has given us *digger*, short for gold-digger. Originally an occupational term of address—compare the use of "soldier" and "sailor"—it had, well before 1900, become a general form of address among men; hence, in the war of 1914-18, the *Diggers* were the Australian soldiers. Also from the (gold-) *diggings* have come *fossick*, to search for something, to look *about* for it; hence *fossicker*, a "scavenger" for gold; *hatter*, a lone-man miner, hence a lonely dweller in the *outback*, is explained by Edward A. Morris as "one who has everything under his own hat" but is more naturally explained as deriving from "mad as a hatter"; *shicer* and *duffer*, both meaning an unproductive mine, come ultimately from the underworld; to *salt* a useless claim or mine with gold dust or small nuggets.

Some of the gold-diggers were tramps, "dead-beats," wanderers, itinerants working only sporadically and under the direst obligation, and several terms connected with them are worth recording—*battler*, because he battles his way through life, as in Kylic Tennant's notable sociological novel, *The Battlers*; *toe-ragger*, a dead-beat wanderer, from the rags worn instead of socks; the obsolete *Murrumbidgee whaler*, a man unusually lazy, even for a tramp, from basking on the shores of that river and boasting about the enormous fish he didn't catch; *on the wallaby* (*track* understood), on tramp; *waltzing Matilda* (noun), carrying a swag—a "jazzed up" distortion of *walking Matilda*, where *Matilda* affectionately refers to the swag, much as *Liz* or *Lizzie* does to a type of motor-car; *bluey*, a swag, from the blue, or the grey striped with blue, blanket carried by the tramp; *scale a rattler*, to jump a train.



## *The People*

It would probably be impossible, it would certainly be tedious, to furnish an adequate selection of the terms added to the language by every succeeding cultural wave. It is, however, fitting to mention the main influences operating after the gold-rush days. They are:

The further opening-up of the country, not only by exploration but also by gradual settlement.

The constant antiphony—the physical contrast and the spiritual conflict—between town and country, for in no other land does so high a proportion of the population live in the large cities, an alarming number in the state capitals alone: a vast subject this, worthy of a doctorate either in economics or in linguistics, for its intellectual and cultural implications are extremely complex.

The Boer War (1899-1902), World War One (1914-18) and World War Two (1939-1945) have considerably affected Australians, whether they served abroad or served at home, often by rendering them sharply conscious of the merits and advantages of their own country;\* which brings us to—

Australian nationalism, first inculcated intensively by J. F. Archibald, founder of *The Bulletin*; an unusual nationalism, for it has an unmistakably dualistic nature, combining a fierce loyalty to Australia with, especially in times of emergency, an indefeasible loyalty to the Crown.

The cinema, at the end of the nineteenth century, with the “talkies” coming some thirty years later, and then radio from the early 1920’s, have considerably influenced Australian speech and vocabulary, as they have influenced those of almost every other civilised country.

Americanisation, detectable in the large cities ever since about 1910, has spread with the increase of the cinema habit and notably since 1942, the year in which the American “invasion” began. This rapidly increasing Americanisation has something, admittedly difficult to analyse and impossible to assess, to do with recent trends in Australian nationalism. The Americanisation has come not only from cinema and radio, books and magazines, but also from the adroit employment of American capital and from the residence and visits of American businessmen.

\*See pages 129-130 for a brief glossary of soldier slang.

## *Their Language*

Periodicals have, from early days and as a result of the preponderance of gazettes and other periodicals over books for at least two generations, exercised in Australia an influence far greater than that exercised by books. Without labouring the point, one may remark that this newspaper influence has powerfully and intimately affected the character of Australian speech as well as of Australian writings, especially towards a reduction of the literary and artistic, the aesthetic and intellectual, elements in speech and writing. That reduction is sometimes, although by no means always, a very good thing.

The preceding paragraph should lead us into an attempt to describe the general characteristics of Australian English, but that must come later, for here, not altogether ineptly, one must interpose a paragraph or so on Australian pronunciation.

Australian pronunciation depends upon, indeed it has been conditioned by, exactly the same two great factors as have determined the development and then largely established the nature of every kind of what was originally some colonial English or other—American, Canadian, South African, Australian, or New Zealand, to take them in the chronological order of the foundation of the respective colonies: the racial and the climatic. In short, the processes that have gone to form Australian pronunciation, were like the results, inevitable.

First, the racial factor. The earliest inhabitants of Botany Bay were predominantly English, with a few from Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Of the Englishmen, a high proportion came from London. Until late in the nineteenth century, few foreigners settled in Australia. When foreigners did begin to arrive in any numbers, Germans, French, Italians and, among Asiatics, Chinese led the way. But Australia never became a racial melting-pot as the United States and, rather less, Canada have done. The preponderating racial or, if you prefer it, linguistic influence has been British, especially English, with that of London very noticeable.

But more important is the climatic influence. Climate and physical surroundings have gradually shaped Australian pronunciation into something decidedly *sui generis*, quite distinct even from South African. Nothing much has been done, and it has been done rather late in the day, to modify it. But a people has full rights to its own speech: to leave it as it is, and glory in it; or to modify it. What is to be deprecated is that Australians should be so very accent-conscious. They can either preserve their ancient speech and, like the Americans, think, perhaps even say, "This is ours and we like it. If you don't like it, you know

## *The People*

what you can do about it"—or they can set about modifying it. The decision rests entirely with them.

After saying something, for I obviously had to say something, on that extremely thorny subject (Englishmen, by the way, think that Australians attribute to pronunciation an importance considerably greater than it has), I turn with relief to a rather less thorny, though still slightly prickly, subject: the general characteristics of Australian English. But before doing so I should like to add that the British attitude perhaps has something in its favour. Britons are neither proud nor ashamed of their pronunciation (accent, intonation, pitch); they take it for granted. Nor are they much concerned with exterior criticism, whether favourable or neutral or adverse, of their pronunciation; they do, however, take pains with it.

The principal characteristics of "the Australian language" are, it seems to me, the following:

"A marked feature of 'lowbrowism' in our speech—a deliberate speaking-down, an avoidance of polish and finesse in speech, the adoption of a hard-boiled, to hell-with-the-King's-English view" (Sidney J. Baker). But that aspect of "speaking down" which consists in understatement is generically British, not particularly Australian. Yet what's wrong with subtlety and suppleness and educated, cultured speech—and especially with cultured, educated, supple, subtle writing, provided that these qualities do not (there's no compulsion why they should) inpair, much less destroy, clarity and vigour? To relinquish all such shades of meaning as possess intellectual, moral, spiritual significance and importance would be defeatist and degrading. Yet Australians are no more defeatist, no more degraded than any other people: so why pretend to worship things that, if pursued for any length of time, would render them, not a people respected, as indeed they are, but something rather different? Directness is a virtue; it is, however, a virtue less valuable than clarity and adequacy.

A marked dependence upon the use of slang in speech and even in writing. The use is excessive, the dependence unfortunate. But—this is a truly tremendous "but"—the best Australian writers, be they historians or essayists, poets or novelists or short-story writers, publicists or journalists, use no more slang than the best English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish writers and slightly less than the best Americans.

The tendency of Australian humour to be sardonic or ironic. "The native-born joke . . . comes pat, faintly mocking, hiding a sting in its tail," as the late Dr. Thomas Wood remarked in *Cobbers*.

## *Their Language*

The Cockney and American influence and elements, the former rapidly decreasing, the latter rapidly increasing, have, like the Aboriginal element, been sufficiently dealt with in earlier pages.

Australian syntax tends to discard all the subtleties of English syntax and several subtleties of English accidence. Yet the greatest Australian writers do not lack subtlety, discrimination, finesse, variety.

A far greater number of Australian writers in prose than in verse, and a very clearly-marked tendency in the Australian public to refrain from reading verse. The latter characteristic is merely a characteristic of the human race; in all the British Dominions, as also in U.S.A., this tendency is even more potent than it is in Britain.

The disappearance of such English words as field and lea and meadow, brook, and rivulet, glen and coomb, vale and dale, wood (forest) and thicket, mere and pond, copse and spinney, fen and marsh, knoll and mound, and also of such words as village and hamlet, inn and hostelry.

The disappearance of such honorifics as sir and madam, and of Esq(uire) after a name.

The tendency of the spoken vocabulary to be much, that of the written vocabulary to be very slightly, smaller than that of an Englishman or a Scot or an Irishman of approximately the same education or culture or social standing.

But on the other hand, a greater facility and a much slighter self-consciousness about the coining and using of new metaphors or of "outlandish" speech: in short, a readier welcome to linguistic originality, although not (I believe) to literary, artistic, or musical originality.

So far the influence of Australian English upon the English of either Britain or the United States has been small, with the necessary exception that perhaps a hundred specifically Australian words, or senses of words, have penetrated the British and American vocabularies. This natural state of things will inevitably continue until Australia has a population of at least thirty million, or produces (as indeed she might, before long, produce) a literature that forces the outside world to think of it, not as "an interesting curiosity" but as an integral and valuable part of the world's literature.



## THE PEOPLE VIII

---

*While Australians are developing a language for their new world, they have not forgotten how to speak the language of the old. This is proved by the frequency, and apparent ease, with which they force their way to the top in many highly competitive spheres in Great Britain and the United States.*

*As a matter of interest, and we think significance, this chapter lists some of the names which will be generally familiar. Certainly there is a parochial pride in its writing, but a pride which is justified by achievement. If the home town boy makes good, does the town have to keep quiet about it? Certainly not in an extrovert country like ours.*

*Alan Wood has a good story to tell, and tells it with the direct approach that enabled him to write the facts of The Groundnut Affair, the fictitious adventures of Herbert, and a candid assessment of Mr. Rank.*

# *Their Achievements Abroad*

ALAN WOOD

THE TROUBLE is knowing where to begin. Professor Gilbert Murray, the greatest Greek scholar of the age; Sir Howard Florey, co-discoverer of penicillin; Lord Bruce, Chairman of the Finance Corporation for Industry; Lord Baillieu, former President of the Federation of British Industries; Robert Helpmann the ballet dancer and Eileen Joyce the concert pianist; Joy Nichols and Dick Bentley, variety artists of the stage and *Take It From Here*. . . .

Australians are everywhere, and their successes have been achieved in the most diverse and widely-separated fields. I regret to report my discovery, for instance, that Miss Joy Nichols had never heard of Professor Gilbert Murray, O.M.; while Professor Murray, when I asked him in turn, confessed that he had never heard of Miss Nichols.

Every boat which takes British emigrants to Australia brings back young Australians bent on making names for themselves overseas. Is there any particular explanation for their success? Are there any common characteristics shared by those who have conquered the world in so many different spheres? Why should Australians excel in such unrelated types of occupation as, for instance, aviation, cricket, classical music, and journalism? Is there anything in common between—let us say—Sir Donald Bradman on the one hand, and Eileen Joyce on the other?

I think there is, and that it is something which many individual Australians share. It is an almost ruthless single-mindedness of purpose in achieving their chosen aim in life.

Consider, for instance, the story of Eileen Joyce's life, beginning as a bare-foot girl of the Australian bush, brought up in nothing but hardship. She was born in Tasmania, where her father was a bushman of fighting Irish descent. He crossed to the mainland, to gold mines near Kalgoorlie, where he worked himself to death with dust in his lungs; while his brother, with more worldly wisdom, set up as a hotel keeper. Eileen was sent to a convent school, which had a piano. From then

## *Their Achievements Abroad*

on nothing could keep her from a piano. She persuaded her father to buy her first piano (for £1) from his brother the hotel keeper. She went on to school in Perth, where Percy Grainger, the Australian pianist and composer, heard her play; he insisted that she should study abroad; and a local collection raised the money to send her to Leipzig.

She came to England after her training, and again had a desperate struggle to establish herself in the face of continued advice, friendly or otherwise, to go back to Australia. She wrote to gramophone companies asking to make records; they replied that they had never heard of her, and had plenty of pianists in any case. Finally she asked what they would *charge* her to make a record, and they said it cost £7. 10. 0. Somehow she saved the money and went to the Parlophone studios; the moment they heard the result they decided to buy it, and commissioned her to make more. Her records became immensely popular; and she became even better known through films, providing the sound tracks for *The Seventh Veil*, *Brief Encounter*, and *Wherever She Goes*, the film story of her own life. To-day, by common consent, she has the widest following of any concert pianist in Britain.

Quite lately she met a woman who had known her as a ragged red-haired schoolgirl in Australia. "I remember you well," the woman told her. "We hated you. You never thought of anything but the piano." A few days afterwards Eileen Joyce met another woman who had studied with her under Teichmüller at Leipzig. "Yes, I remember," she was told again, "We all hated you. You were always practising." Eileen Joyce still practises eight hours a day; she calculates she has spent a quarter of a million hours sitting in front of pianos.

There are obvious points of resemblance between this story and that of Don Bradman, who has also been unpopular at times—the small boy who would practise fielding, hour after hour, by throwing a ball at a fence post; the Bowral youth who was detested for miles around (they could never get him out); the cricket captain who led Australia to victory again and again by ruthless play and relentless strategy.

To take a similar example from yet another sphere, there is the belligerent career of Air Vice-Marshal Donald Bennett, born in Toowoomba, an airman following in the Australian tradition of Ross and Keith Smith, Hinkler, Kingsford-Smith, Ulm, and many others. Seconded from the R.A.A.F. to the R.A.F., Bennett became during the 1930's an Imperial Airways pilot. He specialised in pioneering jobs, with a preference for those declared impossible; he flew the first commercial payload across the Atlantic, and set up the world's long-



## *The People*

distance seaplane record in the top half of the experimental Mayo composite plane.

Perhaps his greatest achievement was inaugurating the Atlantic Ferry service during the war, leading a flight of seven Hudsons for delivery to England in the first winter Atlantic crossing, after Air Ministry experts had declared the whole idea suicidal. Subsequently, commanding a Halifax squadron, he was shot down in a raid on the *Tirpitz* at Trondheim, baled out, and escaped through the snow to Sweden by dint of continually crossing streams to foil the search dogs used by the Germans.

Back in England it occurred to Bennett, with Australian directness, that it was a pity Allied bombers spent so much time missing the target; the result was that he formed and led (once again, against the strong opposition of orthodox Air Marshals) the Pathfinder Force of picked crews who went ahead to find and mark targets with flares. At the age of thirty-three he became the R.A.F.'s youngest Air Vice-Marshal.

After the war, to the fury of the long-established B.O.A.C., he was allowed to set up the first air service to South America. As Chief Executive of British South American Airways, a public corporation, he was nominally independent of political control; as an Australian, he exercised that independence, having a famous fight with the Minister of Civil Aviation; as a result, he departed to start his own very successful independent air company.

We may take Eileen Joyce and Donald Bennett as typifying concentrated Australian determination: and I think there is one other common Australian characteristic, shared by them and many of the others we will be mentioning. That is a capacity for seeing through pretence and humbug, and looking at things exactly as they are. In the war, for instance, it seemed to me that the typical Australian airman avoided both the exuberant exaggeration of the U.S.A.A.F., and the modest understatement of the R.A.F. If an American pilot shot down two Messerschmitts, the communiqué might report the destruction of three. If a British pilot did the same thing, he would claim one and a possible. But an Australian who shot down two Messerschmitts would come down and, interrogated by the Intelligence Officer, would say quite simply that he had shot down two Messerschmitts.

This capacity for literal exactness can sometimes have startling results in spheres of thought given over to vague confusion and pious delusion; and it can sometimes earn Australians overseas the reputation of being rude, aggressive, and uncouth. (After all, politeness usually consists in telling lies.) Perhaps it has been fostered by the harsh realities and hard

## *Their Achievements Abroad*

outlines of the Australian bush, with none of the fogs and soft tints and faint mists of England. But, whatever the reason, this capacity for clearness and exactitude is another factor explaining Australian success in such things as flying aeroplanes, playing cricket, and playing the piano. The only thing these varied occupations have in common is that, in all of them, precision is essential.

Lord Bruce of Melbourne, who is well qualified to judge, is among those who have pointed out clear-headedness as a special Australian characteristic; to be candid, I must couple this with his opinion that Australians also have a capacity for "being more stupid than any other damn people on earth . . . They are always insisting on getting themselves into a ruddy crisis—and then they pull themselves together better than any other nation would do." I leave others to explore the paradoxes of the Australian character in the mass; here I am only concerned with the number of individuals who have the capacity for seeing things for what they are, and not what they look like. This characteristic, obviously enough, is the reason why Australians, as mentioned elsewhere, have won such fame abroad as cartoonists.

C. E. Montague, in *Disenchantment*, writes of an A.I.F. sergeant "poking about, like a good Australian, for something to see." The combination of a liking for exact facts, with a persistent curiosity in seeking them out, gives Australians unusual success in Fleet Street. Journalism, nowadays, is a profession which has been brought into disrepute by some of the newspapers. But, after all, its ideals are identical with those inspiring the highest scientific research and exact scholarship—a determination to reject hearsay, test every assumption, try every possibility, and seek truth at first hand. This same habit of mind has brought success in medicine, science, and the academic world in general. The Australian readiness for experiment is reflected in the work of Sir Neil Fairley in tropical diseases; the research of Sir Thomas Dunhill, King George VI's surgeon, on goitre; and by Lionel Logue's success in speech therapy—Logue, who helped the King to overcome his stammer, died only a short while ago. There also died recently Sister Kenny: who, after meeting great opposition in Australia to her methods for treating infantile paralysis, went to America and had her work backed by the University of Minnesota.

One of the most flourishing Australian colonies overseas is at Oxford. It is presided over by Gilbert Murray on Boar's Hill: at the age of eighty-seven he can still climb up the steep slope from the bottom of his garden

## *The People*

more nimbly than some of his visitors. He was first taught Greek at an Australian school by a man sent down from Magdalen for playing blind hockey—a happy accident to which, conceivably, we owe the translations of *The Trojan Women*, *Medea*, and the other fruits of Professor Murray's scholarship.

Sir Howard Florey of Adelaide is still carrying on research in the Oxford pathological laboratories where he developed penicillin; unhappily Sir Hugh Cairns, the great brain surgeon whose work was also so important during the war, died in 1952. Professor Wheare, at All Souls, remains one of the world's greatest authorities on aspects of political science concerned with constitutional matters; though he wanted to return home he was virtually obliged to stay in England, as there was no job available in Australia in his specialised field.

Other Oxford Australians include Sir Carleton Allen, formerly Warden of Rhodes House; T. Dunbabin, University Reader in Classical Archaeology; E. W. Gray, University Lecturer in Ancient History, and a Christ Church don; Hugh Stretton, a young History Fellow at Balliol. The Australian conquest of Oxford, however, has not stopped short at its high tables. The Vicar of the University Church, the Rev. R. S. Lee, author of *Freud and Christianity*, is an Australian; and so is the youthful Mayor of Oxford, Alan Brown, a law don at Worcester who commanded a company in the Scots Guards during the war, and was mentioned in despatches. In the field of adult education at Oxford there are such figures as A. L. G. Mackay, formerly Professor of Economics at Rangoon, and Professor J. F. Bruce.

Though it may surprise some people, it is probably in the academic sphere, among all the professions, that Australians have won most distinction throughout the world, led by many Rhodes scholars.

To take some random examples, the Professor of Economics at Harvard is an Australian (A. Smithies); and so is the Professor of Pathology in the Medical College of Virginia (F. L. Apperley), the Professor of Biochemistry in the University of Western Ontario (R. J. Rossiter), the Vice-Chancellor of Hong Kong University (L. T. Ride), the Principal of the University College of Khartoum (L. C. Wilcher), the Senior Education Officer for Kenya (F. W. Johnson), the Professor of Education at Southampton (F. W. Wagner), the Professor of Anatomy at Belfast (J. J. Pritchard), the Professor of Tropical Medicine at Liverpool (B. G. Macgregair), the Professor of Psychology at Aberdeen (Rex Knight), and the Professor of French at Edinburgh (John Orr) . . .

On the whole, the Australian talent seems to turn more to science

### *Their Achievements Abroad*

and medicine than to abstract subjects like philosophy. No leading Australian philosopher has appeared overseas since Samuel Alexander wrote *Space, Time and Deity*.

London University has its own Australian colony with Brian Windeyer, Professor of Radiology; Carey Taylor, Professor of French; Clabon Allen, Professor of Astronomy and Director of the Mill Hill Observatory; Dr. E. H. S. Burhop, Reader in Physics at University College; A. J. Marshall, Reader in Zoology. Gordon Childe, Professor of Prehistoric European Archaeology, and Director of the Institute of Archaeology, is widely known for his *What Happened In History*.

Most famous perhaps, is Professor Sir Keith Hancock, Director of the London University Institute of Commonwealth Studies, and one of the greatest living historians. After a brilliant Oxford career, winning an All Souls Fellowship, he went back to Australia as Professor of History at Adelaide University; but he had to return to England as he could not, at Adelaide, carry out work he wanted to do on theories of power in government, studied from the conflicting viewpoints of Hobbes and Grotius. He accepted a Chair at Birmingham; and there followed a succession of honours including election to the Chichele Professorship of Economic History at Oxford, selection as editor of the British civil war histories, a knighthood, and recently the assignment of writing the official biography of General Smuts.

By way of contrast to so many success stories, it is perhaps characteristic that Australians have accomplished little in British politics; there is something about the atmosphere of Westminster, with its continual half-truths and smooth evasions and polite compromises, which seems uncongenial to the Australian mind.

Air Vice-Marshal Donald Bennett had a brief period as a Liberal M.P. His lack of further success so far in British politics is perhaps sufficiently explained by a remark he once made to me: "I don't like people who tell lies." Sir Leslie Boyce was a Conservative backbencher for many years, but he lost his seat in 1945, and his greatest distinction has been as a businessman, culminating in the honour of election as the first Australian to become Lord Mayor of London. R. W. G. Mackay, brother of A. L. G. Mackay, and like Boyce an old boy of the Sydney Grammar School, did outstanding work after the war in the United Europe movement. But he damaged his political future by his frankness in stressing, as a Labour M.P., how much Labour Governments owed to American aid; and he lost his seat in 1951.

## *The People*

Australians are rather more successful in the backrooms of public life, where clear thinking is more important than pliability. Perhaps the most famous is Lord Hankey, Secretary to Lloyd George's War Cabinet and the Committee of Imperial Defence, and for a time a member of the Cabinet himself; but, though born in Australia, he was brought up in England.

In present times, two Australians have had a great deal to do, behind the scenes, with the British Government's economic policies since the war. One of them is Robert Hall, son of a Queensland engineer, who first made his way to England as a Rhodes scholar. With a staff of some fourteen economists working under him, he is now recognised, in name as well as fact, as the chief Economic Adviser to the Government. Some of the most important measures in the past years have originated in Hall's pleasant room overlooking St. James's Park, with a bed in the corner where he can live on the job. (He was among the economics dons who went into Whitehall during the war, and his home is still in Oxford.)

The second backroom Australian is S. C. Leslie, head of the Information Division of the Treasury, whose ability has carried the influence of his advice over the whole field of public relations, in an unusually wide sense of that elastic term. His career is one of the most curious among all the conquering Australians; a Rhodes scholar from Melbourne, he was awarded an Oxford Doctorate of Philosophy for a thesis studying the problem of personality as discussed by contemporary philosophers. He was appointed lecturer in philosophy at Melbourne, but decided he wanted to return to England for personal reasons, and planned ways of getting back. To further this end, he went into journalism, and finally succeeded in coming to England as press adviser to Lord Bruce, then Mr. Stanley Bruce and Australian Prime Minister, for an Imperial Conference. Next he went into advertising in Britain, becoming the first philosopher to be publicity manager for the Gas, Light and Coke Company. Before the war he got to know Herbert Morrison, who brought him to Whitehall in 1940; and he has spent most of his time in Whitehall ever since. For the last six years his main task has been interpreting Britain's eternal economic crises to the public.

A third Australian high up in the British Government service is Sir Robert Fraser from Adelaide, Director General of the Central Office of Information. Like many others, he had no intention of staying in England; but, while still a student at London University, he was offered

### *Their Achievements Abroad*

a position as leader-writer on a national newspaper. Having no definite job to go back to in Australia, he accepted; and stayed on.

In business life in Britain I have already mentioned Sir Leslie Boyce; other names are Colonel A. C. Waite, managing Director of the Austin Motor Export Corporation; Kenneth Hall, a highly successful owner of a chain of restaurants in London; and W. J. Worboys of Imperial Chemical Industries, Chairman of the Council of Industrial Design. But the most remarkable instance of Australian business success overseas is the story of the Nicholas family and the Aspro firm.

It began during the First World War when George Nicholas, in a little chemist's shop at Windsor near Melbourne, succeeded in synthesising acetylsalicylic acid, or aspirin—previously a German monopoly. In 1925 he and his brother Alfred set up the British Aspro firm (of which the present Managing Director, J. W. Jamison, is another Australian). Expansion continued: and by now, under the Chairmanship of Alfred's son Maurice Nicholas, Aspro's and their associated companies not only have factories in Australia and Britain, but also in Vienna, Dublin, Brussels, Paris, Amsterdam, Durban, Bombay, Wellington, and Djakarta. Between them they provide the world with six million tablets of Aspro a day.

The championship in producing Australians distinguished in the business world is probably held by the Melbourne Church of England Grammar School. Four boys followed each other through this school about the turn of the century. Their names were Stanley Bruce, Clive Baillieu, Reginald Leeper, and Dick Casey. . . . The present Lord Bruce of Melbourne came to England as a student, rowed in a victorious Cambridge eight, fought with the A.I.F., went back into business in Australia, and became the youngest Prime Minister in Australian history. As a member of a later Ministry he came to England for six months to negotiate conversion loans in the City of London; he stayed fourteen years as Australian High Commissioner. Afterwards came a peccage and the Chairmanship of his Finance Corporation, making him one of the leading figures in British industry—which, at the time of writing owes his Corporation something over £70,000,000.

The present Lord Baillieu was Captain of the School some years after Bruce: he rowed for Oxford instead of Cambridge, but of course his crew also won. Again like Bruce, he served with the A.I.F. in the First World War. Afterwards he came to spend most of his time, almost inevitably, in England—he is one of those people who seem born to fill whole columns in the *Directory of Directors*. The list at present includes

## *The People*

Chairman of the Dunlop Rubber Company, Chairman of the Central Mining and Investment Company, Director of the Consolidated Zinc Corporation, the Midland Bank, the English, Scottish and Australian Bank, etc., etc. But he is best known for his Presidency of the Federation of British Industries, and for his war-time work leading the British Purchasing Commission and Raw Materials Mission in Washington.

Now Chairman of the English Speaking Union, he did a great deal to help Anglo-American goodwill during the war by setting up a bureau to investigate every cause of complaint between the two countries—"There's nothing," he says, "like getting at the facts"—and the Joint Productivity teams of to-day naturally evolved from the lessons and techniques of the war period.

The present Sir Reginald Leeper, invalided out of the Army during the First World War, joined his brother Allen Leeper in the British Foreign Office. He was British Ambassador in Greece during the troubles in the winter of 1944-5. Afterwards he became Ambassador to the Argentine: where, with his old schoolfellow Clive Baillieu, Head of the British Mission, he successfully negotiated the Commercial Agreement of 1948. Sir Reginald later went into business, and his directorships now include De Beers, the great South African diamond concern.

When Stanley Bruce came to London as Australian Prime Minister for the 1923 Imperial Conference, he got to know Allen Leeper, then one of Lord Curzon's secretaries, and asked his advice on setting up an Australian diplomatic service. Leeper decided it was too early for this, but said that Australia should send a liaison officer to the British Foreign Office. The man selected for the job was Richard Casey, previously in business in various mining and engineering companies. Subsequent jobs held by Casey include Australian Treasurer; Australian Minister in Washington; Minister of State in the Middle East, as a Member of the British War Cabinet; Governor of Bengal; and Australian Minister for External Affairs.

One other diplomat must be mentioned here: Sir David Kelly, born in Melbourne, former British Ambassador in Moscow, and author of *The Ruling Few*.

It is right and proper to deal with business before pleasure: but of course Australian politicians and businessmen, as a general rule, can find enough scope for their activities in Australia; the higher proportion of those who go overseas are writers, artists, musicians, actors, and so on. Australians in these fields are so well known, and space is getting so short, that we need do little more than mention names. Henry Handel

## *Their Achievements Abroad*

Richardson perhaps remains the leading name among Australian overseas novelists; among her successors to-day are Mary Mitchell, Jack and Philip Lindsay, James Aldridge and Jon Cleary. In a specialised sphere there is A. W. Wheen, best known for his translation of *All Quiet On The Western Front*; in publishing, Lovat Dickson of Macmillans. Among playwrights, Hugh Hastings, author of *Seagulls Over Sorrento*. Among actors, Peter Finch of the films and the Old Vic, and Coral Browne of light comedy. Among the impresarios, the late Sir Oswald Stoll was born in Australia; while a constant stream of Australians have won success on the English music hall, led by Albert Whelan. (He was always billed as "Australian entertainer": after the First World War, he was asked to change it by one theatre manager because Australian soldiers had been unpopular in the district, but he said "Either they like me as an Australian, or they don't have me at all.")

In broadcasting there are Joy Nichols and Dick Bentley, stars of the only B.B.C. variety programme which I can listen to without acute depression. Bentley visited England before the war and married an English girl. After the war he returned for six months so that she could see her family, and he was soon a permanent fixture in *Take It From Here* (from which alone he earns the pleasant sum of just on £250 a week).

Other B.B.C. Australians are Bill Kerr, Kitty Bluett, and Alan Stranks, a former crime reporter in Australia who writes the popular *P.C. 49* and *Flint of the Flying Squad*. On the administrative side, Robert McCall has a key job as Assistant Director of Television, which he talks about so enthusiastically that he has even induced me to buy a set: explaining how quickly it is growing, he will ask, "Did you ever see an Australian bush fire? . . ."

The talent of Australian musicians has been recognised ever since Dame Nellie Melba became Queen of Covent Garden. One of her successors to-day is Joan Hammond, whose versatile accomplishments include three times winning the New South Wales Ladies Golf Championship. Australians are still most prominent as singers: Marjorie Lawrence, Florence Austral, Sylvia Fisher, Peter Dawson, John Brownlee, William Herbert, John Lanigan, Breach Riley, Elsie Morison, Rosina Raisbeck, Arnold Matters, Stanley Clarkson, John Cameron; and, among many promising newcomers, Joan Sutherland at Covent Garden.

It is a typical Australian paradox that it should produce some of the ugliest speaking voices, and the most beautiful singing voices, in the world; I am told—I am no expert—that the same national habit of



## *The People*

producing the voice well forward, with nasal resonance, helps to account for both.

Among instrumentalists—in addition to Eileen Joyce—there are Noel Mewton-Wood, Valda Aveling and Nancy Weir, pianists; Beryl Kimber and Carmel Hakendorf, violinists; John Kennedy, cello; and Sir William McKie, organist of Westminster Abbey, responsible for the music at the Queen's Coronation. (McKie is so anxious not to become Anglicised that he makes a point of repeating to himself, once a week, some Australian expressions like "Too right"). Among composers we may mention Arthur Benjamin, Dudley Glass, and Percy Grainger, the latter having lived for many years in America.

One of the most talented of Australians, and the hardest to classify, is Robert Helpmann. After some years on the Australian stage with J. C. Williamson, he came to England and—starting with an engagement at £3 a week—was for many years the leading dancer of the Sadlers Wells ballet. Not content with this, he became a highly original Shakespearian actor; and then proceeded into films, not only dancing in *The Red Shoes*, but playing a dramatic, sinister and mysterious role—the point of which, I confess, is still a mystery to me—in *The Tales Of Hoffmann*.

Also in the film world: Robert Krasker, brilliant lighting cameraman of *Henry V* and *The Red Shoes*. . . . But it is hopeless trying to make any list complete. Even now I have not mentioned the Australian artists in England, the professional cricketers, the jockeys, the speedway riders; I can only leave them to others and try to come to some sort of conclusion.

The question always asked, in view of the prodigious amount of talent continually being spilled abroad, is whether this exodus is good for Australia. Is there any answer, for instance, to what might be called the problem of the displaced Australian intellectual? Certainly few of them have forgotten Australia, or do not long at times for the sight of a gum tree. S. C. Leslie has a reproduction of one of John Rowell's Australian landscapes hanging in his room at the Treasury. Sir Robert Fraser, who has not been back for over twenty-five years, can be filled with nostalgia by a visit to the special collection of Australian plants at Kew, and will come back to tell other Australians in London that the bottle-brush is in flower. Sir Reginald Leeper, away for over forty years, still talks of the aromatic smell of the bush near his boyhood home. Gilbert Murray can describe in detail the sights and sounds of Australia, though he came to

## *Their Achievements Abroad*

England at eleven, and his only return visit was a health trip some fifty years ago.

All are torn at times between nostalgic longings and the fact that their best work can only be done overseas; and there are several stories of prominent Australians overseas who have made efforts to go home, without success.

After the war Stanley Bruce went back ready, if there was any insistent demand, to re-enter Australian politics; but said he had "never seen it made more apparent that a man was not wanted," and he returned to be invited to the House of Lords and to one of the most important jobs British industry had to offer. It is common knowledge that after the war Sir Keith Hancock hoped to go out to the Australian National University at Canberra, even though this meant resigning his Oxford Professorship; but the plan fell through. And there are other examples.

It must be confessed that there is sometimes a certain feeling in Australia against Australians who have settled abroad; there is talk about them as "expatriates," as though they should be sharply differentiated from those who have been fortunate enough to find their life work in Australia. But it would be just as true to say that the typical Australian is the one who goes abroad: in the same way that the typical Scotsman is the one who sets off to make his fortune in London.

Wherever you went in the world, you used to find Scotsmen firmly settled in the best jobs; Australians are now rivalling the Scots in this ubiquity. No typical Australian boy, brought up near Sydney harbour, seeing the big ships sail in and out, has not dreamed of the day when he will sail off himself to seek adventure overseas. They are a much-travelled race, the Australians; the world still remembers how two generations of fighting men bore arms in almost every part of the globe. Is there anything unpatriotic about their peacetime counterparts who leave Australia?

There was no more intensely patriotic country than nineteenth-century England; but one might almost say that the typical Englishman of that period was to be found anywhere but in England itself: he was going out to rule India, or to trade in China, or to colonise Africa—or to settle in Australia. Or take that other great patriotic era, the reign of the first Queen Elizabeth: one always pictures the typical Elizabethan as setting off to sail the seas with Drake and Frobisher. Shakespeare was the epitome of his age: but, being a true Elizabethan, his imagination was always ranging the world, and he set his plays in any time or place except Elizabethan England. This sort of universal interest is something

## *The People*

which is also typical of the Australian spirit; and it is narrow nonsense to think of an Australian author as one who confines himself to writing about Australia.

It is not in the Australian character to be content with being a large fish in a small pool, or to be satisfied with the second best: and nothing can stop the first-rate scientist seeking out the best-equipped laboratories in the world, the first-rate philosopher making straight for Oxford, the first-rate film actor going to Britain or Hollywood, the first-rate musician wanting the teachers and concert halls of Europe. The wise thing is to recognise this frankly, and concentrate on making it a little easier for the traffic to flow also in the opposite direction.

One day, I hope, Australia will itself be a centre of world civilisation in science and culture and scholarship, inviting and attracting talent from the world, including the talent it has itself exported. It is wishful delusion to pretend that this day has come already, except in a few fortunate spheres: though I myself believe it may come much sooner than most people realise. Apart from the possibility of the obliteration of Western civilisation in another war, some countries are now shackling the artist and writer by intolerance, while others are busily exterminating them by taxation. But if they are to find a new Renaissance in Australia, this can never be created by narrow Australian nationalism; it can only come from a recognition that to be a citizen of Australia is to be a citizen of the world.

## THE PEOPLE IX

---

Careful readers, who have made their way to this point chapter by chapter, will have noted the constantly recurring theme of "the future." With seventeen different writers working in the confined space of one book, it is natural that they may in a word here, a phrase there, have trodden on one another's toes, but they have all agreed that Australia is a land of promise. There is no need to boast about past triumphs when they are confident of triumphs to come.

"Men who look a hundred years hence . . ." says Paul Bricehill, and carries our minds to far horizons of achievement.

The Snowy Mountains scheme is "something big . . . something belonging to the future, like Australia," says George H. Johnston.

"For Australian artists, the way is still open for discovery," says Colin MacInnes.

In writing books and building dams, in painting pictures and playing cricket, we Australians tell the world "you ain't seen nothing yet." We have no Regency houses, no Chippendale chairs, no moated castles. But we have wonderful plumbing. Come back in fifty years and you will be amazed at the house we have built to go with it. We get the physical necessities of life settled first, and in Canberra we put down sewers before we started building a city. If we seem a little crude to the old world in things cultural, the old world often seems more than a little crude to us in things material.

To conclude this introduction to Australia, Martin Boyd discusses the style of house we are building. The foundations are laid, and from them it is possible to judge fairly well what the house will look like.

In his novels, particularly *The Montforts* and *The Cardboard Crown*, Mr. Boyd has examined the links which bind Australia to the old world, and especially to Britain. They are the unbreakable links of heredity, and his estimate of the future is written in terms of that heredity as it may be modified by our environment.

# *Their Link with Britain*

MARTIN BOYD

THE LINK between Australia and Britain, other than the economic and political, began with the first strong single passion of the homesick exile. Since then it has been modified by love for the new country, diffused by innumerable personal interests, but kept alive by the steady stream of immigrants, bringing what they could of their household goods. Whether they came in chartered ships, with family, furniture, servants and livestock, like Mr. Henty who in one of the almost Homeric scenes of early settlement tipped his cattle into the sea to swim ashore at Geelong, or with a few humble ornaments from their cottage chimney-pieces, their eyes daily rested on something to remind them of the country they still called "home."

As well as this southward stream of immigrants there has also been the stream in the other direction, of the Australian returning to see the land of his origins, the soil from which he sprung, because, after all, we are not a kind of white Aboriginal. Our blood is entirely European.

To realise how great is our link of sentiment with the people of Britain, we must take a brief if unavoidably superficial excursion into the fields of "culture," using that much-abused word to describe, not the refinement of taste of a small leisured class, but the spirit which informs the whole community. This has its origins in countries far removed from Australia.

Mr. E. M. Forster has written: "Art, religion, culture, are not external adornments, but age-long secretions in the soul of man." It is perhaps one of our disabilities that our age-long secretions did not begin in our own country, like those of old civilisations. Their remote ancestors saw their gods in clouds and heard them in the winds, and placed them on the mountains of the countries in which they still live. We have no indigenous myths. Persephone was not snatched into the underworld from the Blue Mountains, and no Jovian thunderbolts ever fell from Donna Buang.

In fact our religion and our customs are in opposition to the natural

### *Their Link With Britain*

world in which we find ourselves. Easter, the festival of rebirth is celebrated in the autumn, and the churches are decorated with chrysanthemums. At Christmas, possibly with the temperature 108° in the shade, we sit down to turkey and a plum pudding flaming with brandy, all the most heating foods obtainable. These things alone might incline people to look back wistfully to English springs and English snows.

We are concerned here with sentiment, not with science, and the theory which has been advanced that the ethos, or characteristic spirit of a people, is formed by the country it inhabits, almost by some kind of emanation from the soil, may not be a true one, but it provides a useful illustration. We may even believe it to be true when we look, for example, at a people like the Chinese. Everything about them, even their dogs, as well as themselves and their houses, seems to be curiously related to the landscape, and one can easily believe that they take their character from it. The Americans, too, although their stock is so mixed, have already developed a distinctive appearance, and this has been attributed to the influence of their soil, in the same way that the character of the vine is formed not so much by the parent stock of the vine as the terrain where it is planted. A vine from Bordeaux planted in the Hunter River district may produce a very good wine, but it will not be claret.

We, however, have not yet completely absorbed the influences of our new terrain. The spiritual and the natural worlds do not correspond. Our outer things are not yet fully in accord with those which are within. The latter, the age-long secretions, we brought with us. They did not grow through long centuries of life on Australian soil. Socrates said that male and female were once a single spherical body, but the gods cut them in two, and since then every one of the human race has been trying to find his other half. In Australia we are in something the same position. We need, from time to time, to be brought into contact with the land where we formed our spiritual secretions. For most of us that is Britain. This is the deepest and the strongest bond, but like all our most profound feelings, it is one of which we cannot always be conscious.

Our art is of course where this bond of a common culture is most naturally and clearly expressed. Mr. Norman Lindsay is entirely European in his derivations. His nymphs and satyrs are the imagined deities of his remote ancestors, but not in his own country. Some of the younger generation of artists claim to have broken free from obsolete and alien traditions, but they again follow a European example. Even

## *The People*

they cannot break free into a separate Australianism, in spite of interesting experiments with Aboriginal art, such as the ballet *Corroboree*. These things may in time colour our secretions, but they are not in our blood. Whether we like it or not, our ancestry is classical and Christian.

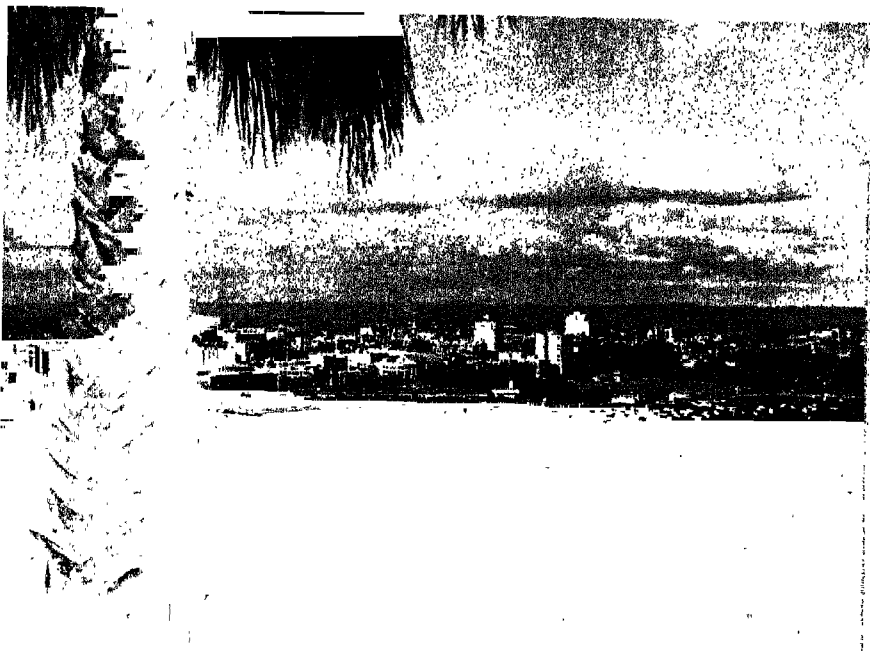
This is perhaps even more evident in our architecture. The great buildings in our capitals which are not purely utilitarian, but which are the expression of a culture, derive from these two civilisations, such as the cathedrals, and in Melbourne the House of Parliament and the fine Renaissance Treasury Building at the top of Collins Street, and the façade of the National Gallery. It is true that all these were built in the last century, and it is curious to note that nothing comparable with them, either in dignity, or with an equal sense of enduring solidity has been attempted since.

We have also to admit that with few exceptions the mass of our literature is English, not only in its language, but in its setting. Those lines of poetry which most stirred our adolescent emotions are full of English imagery. The ash buds are black in March. In April the brushwood round the elm bole is in tiny leaf. "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May" and ripe October has its faded marigolds. It is not an Australian scene, but it is one which the young Australian, if he has any sensibility, cannot help learning to love, long before he has set eyes on it. He may also have heard his parents describe such things as part of the scenes of home.

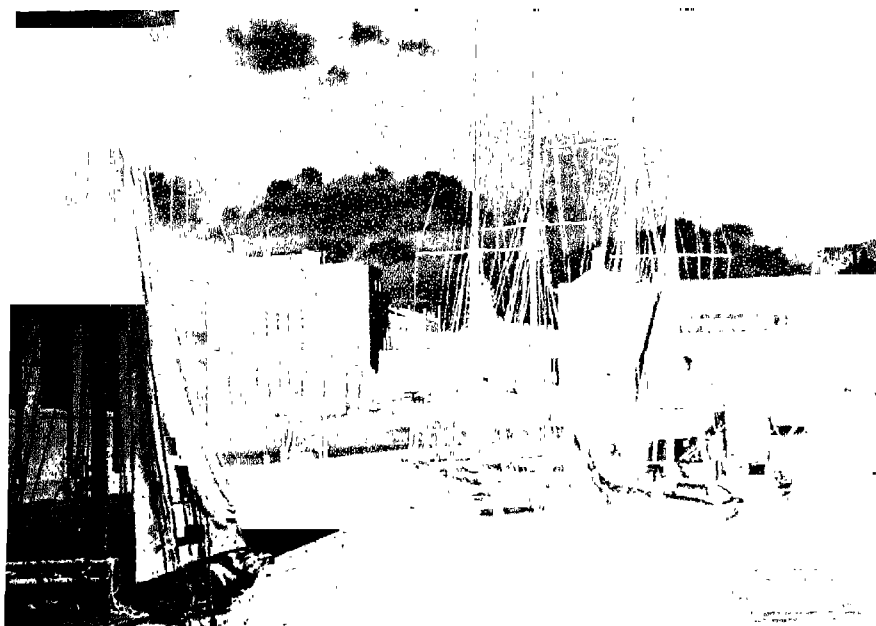
This may be merely emphasising what everyone knows, but does not always remember, that the people of Britain and Australia are of the same family. Even their mutual criticisms are those of relatives. They are different from our criticisms of foreigners, being more heated and less detached, as we are always more intolerant of what we dislike in people who are associated with us. We have no feeling at all about the horrid habits of the Tibetans or the Esquimaux. We are much more concerned about our relatives.

Blood relationship is the most generally accepted basis for ties of sentiment, and though family feeling cannot always be amiable, there are few men of goodwill who do not feel a bond with their own kin. If a man wishes to dissociate himself from his family, there must be something wrong either with himself or with them. A healthy family is united and its life is the basis of all that we know of civilisation. It is both a natural unit and a spiritual one. It is the centre and symbol of the Christian religion, which is still that of our country.

If we look back to the Middle Ages when the social structure was



PERTH (Above) capital of Western Australia, is a city with an easy, sub-tropical charm. (Below) HOBART, capital of Tasmania, is a city with a soft, old-world grace







THE WATERS OF THE PACIFIC beat against the ancient rocks  
*Australia's eastern coastline*

### *Their Link With Britain*

more clearly defined (and we must remember that English history is our own history until one hundred and sixty years ago) we see that it was built entirely on the pattern of the family. The father was the head of the single family, the squire in the place of father to the group that made the village. He may have been a bad father, but at least it was a natural and human relationship. And so the pattern was followed until we find the King the head of the nation, in a relationship which was felt, and still is, to be paternal. The group of temporal kingdoms was under the supreme spiritual authority of the church. In theory it was a perfect political design, in which natural order had a spiritual meaning. It failed through human stupidity, not because it was a wrong conception, but like a fine palace built of faulty bricks. Even so, a great deal of that family conception of the political world still survives, especially in our own Empire, and it is significant that those who are most actively trying to disrupt the Empire are also trying to destroy the ideal of family life. As far as this disruption has proceeded, it has corresponded with a disintegration in the home life of the people. Against this the Royal family is a strong defence.

A Frenchman, envying us our monarchy, wrote recently: "The deep roots of our civilisation spring from a social order ruled by kings and queens." The visit of the Queen to Australia is above all things an occasion when our continuity with that social order, and our blood relationship with Her Majesty's subjects in the old world should be made clear. Now, when the only political link between Australia and Britain is allegiance to the Crown, this visit is an opportunity to strengthen the emotional tie with newly-awakened feelings of loyalty and affection. Both our countries are monarchies, and the same Queen unites them into one family. The Queen is a living symbol of the fact that we are of one blood. The Australian whose patriotism does not extend beyond his own shores, and who would minimise the influence of the Throne, is working against the wholesome strength of the British Commonwealth, and consequently against his own survival.

This historical link is one of the strongest that holds the two peoples together. It gives the Australian a feeling for the soil of England, which, if the theory of the terrain is a true one, influenced the character of his own ancestors. At any rate it is where they lived and struggled for their liberties, and where they shared in the sombre splendours of medieval culture, and the brilliance of the Renaissance. To the present day, as we have seen, our architecture echoes these things. This may seem to be dwelling too much on history and the past, but it is because of the

## *The People*

magnetism they have, not only for us to whom in fact they belong, but for the people of all new countries.

Henry James illustrated this in his novels of Europeanised Americans, but with them it is more an aesthetic appeal, or a desire for social gratifications. It is much longer since the Americans began their separate growth as a nation. It is centuries, not merely a generation, since they regarded Britain as home, and they do not owe allegiance to the same Crown. One does not want to belittle our link to the United States, but only to affirm that the bond of Australia to Britain is a far deeper and stronger one, that of a common blood and a common loyalty, so that when the Australian comes to Britain he is much more than a sightseer. He is on a pilgrimage which everyone of his countrymen hopes to make before he dies.

This is illustrated by a rather moving incident which happened to a man recently leaving Australia. A lady of his acquaintance, who had little hope of making this pilgrimage, begged him to post her a small parcel of English earth, saying that was all of England she might ever see. Some people might think that this was not sentiment but sentimentality, nevertheless it was her sense of history which led her to make the request. She wanted to see this fragment of the soil which had nourished the innumerable generations of her forebears, and on which had been enacted the whole pageant of English history.

It is hard to exaggerate the tremendous impact that history makes on the mind of the imaginative Australian. The boy who grows up in the shadow of Winchester or Canterbury, and is familiar with their crypts and cloisters before he is able to appreciate them, and who takes as a matter of course their associations with King Alfred or St. Thomas, can have little idea of the vivid scenes they convey to the man who first sees them as an adult. The imagination of the English child is not, as it were, forced in the same way. As he learns his history its material evidence surrounds him. The Australian child has to conjure up the whole picture in his mind, so that when at last he comes to Britain, it is like walking into the elusive scenes of his childhood's imagination.

All these things we have been considering, these age-long secretions in their hearts and minds, the early colonists brought with them as well as their household goods. Not only did they speak of England or Scotland, Ireland, or Wales as "home," they tried to make their surroundings as much as possible like the places they had left, even to giving them the same names. Suburbs of Melbourne, such as Kew, Richmond, Camberwell, and Hampton, are called after suburbs of

### *Their Link With Britain*

London, and often in the country when a place has an old-world name, one will find that it is owned by a member of the family with whom that name is associated in Britain.

These settlers planted oak and elm trees round their houses, and laid out English gardens. There are townships in New South Wales and Tasmania where many of the houses would fit harmoniously into an eighteenth-century English village street, and Mr. Hardy Wilson's etchings show the debt of the old country houses in those two states to the classical dignity of the great English homes. Many Australians have a particular affection for Tasmania because it is "so English." As we know only too well, the early settlers sometimes went to disastrous lengths to reproduce English life when they brought out rabbits and blackberries, as well as foxes for hunting. Certain expressions and customs which southern English people imagine are purely Australian, have their origin in Yorkshire, or the Highlands, or County Cork.

There are many political links, which it is unnecessary to mention here, though they strengthen the bonds of sentiment between the two countries, but there is one such link which had been particularly effective in this way, and that is the appointment of governors from Britain.

Sometimes these have been the bearers of historic names, and this has helped to relate Australians to that part of their history which preceded their emigration. Some of these governors, with great public spirit, brought out their fine paintings and tapestries, gold plate and splendid carriages, and reproduced in our country the dignity of their "stately homes," giving us a glimpse into that kind of domestic life round which the larger part of our history has revolved. It is perhaps a pity that men of this rank are not often appointed nowadays, as however able and distinguished others may be, they seldom have the equipment to represent the Crown with so much appropriate display. Also a peer is, as the word implies, the equal of the Crown, which is the summit of the social pyramid, not an isolated ornament suspended far above us without visible support, as the tendency is now to regard it, and it is proper that it should be represented by those who in the social structure are nearest to it.

As the governors on their return home have usually kept up their connection with Australia, and have done an invaluable service by making her more widely understood in the United Kingdom, it is the more desirable that they should be men of prominence in their own country.

Normally it is the richer Australian who is able to travel, or the one whose cultural interests, whatever his finances, draw him irresistibly to the old world, who is most aware of the link between the two countries,

## *The People*

and it is often the difficulty of these people that they *have* two countries. For his own peace of mind it might be as well to advise such a man never to set foot outside his native shores. If he does so he may never have a certain home again. The age-long secretions begin to function more vitally in the countries where they were formed, and though in Europe he may sigh for the freedom of home, for the long wash of Australasian seas and the aromatic silence of the bush, if he returns there a sudden memory of a Devonshire lane or of Oxford spires may send him again hurrying off to the shipping office.

The rich and the artist are the more evident and articulate members of a community, but they do not necessarily represent the bulk of the people. These have had, however, ample opportunities for expression. In 1914 and 1939 Australia immediately recognised Britain's danger as her own, but the recognition was not purely self-interested. It sprang from an awareness of blood-relationship and the strong ties of history to which we have referred. This united action in two wars is the surest sign of the bond between the two countries. It is true that other countries fought with Britain in these wars, but they entered the conflict at their convenience, and in self-interest. They are not to be blamed for that, but Australia's response was not calculated. It was immediate and emotional.

The link in the wars is such an obvious one that there is no need to write of it at any length. There is another less spectacular, but very practical way in which our feeling for Britain was shown. Australians were shocked that the people there should be short of food. Those who had relatives and friends in the old country sent innumerable parcels. Those who had not gave generously to the "Food for Britain" campaign. It might be thought that they only gave of their plenty, but in Australia, too, food was rationed. Also, even though it was more plentiful, many people made financial sacrifices to send these regular parcels. One couple, whose annual income was only a few hundreds, spent no less than £300 on food parcels in the last two or three years of the war. This may lead us to ask what is the feeling of the people of Britain for those of their family in the Antipodes.

So far we have been considering only the sentiment of Australians for Britain, and its underlying causes. The Australian is always aware of Britain. His eyes are always liable to turn in her direction. The Englishman, unless he contemplates emigration, has not the same reasons to look towards us. He may know that Australia has come to his aid in two wars, but that does not give him a personal feeling towards her.

## *Their Link With Britain*

The old countries are in our blood. We are not in theirs. It is perhaps a humiliating but inescapable fact that while parents must have a lasting effect on their children, children need not always affect their parents.

From our earliest years we Australians have read about Britain, and her scenes have coloured our imagination, but the large proportion of untravelled English seldom think of Australia except as one of those dominions which are necessary to the Empire, and without which, in fact, there would be no Empire. They accept a few clichés on the subject, imagining Australia as a place where life is crude, where fortunes are easily made, and where people have a certain kind of voice just as the untravelled Australian imagines England as a place where people are stiff in manner and have a certain kind of voice.

An Australian boy, hearing the late King George VI speak on the wireless, said: "He didn't sound a bit like an Englishman, only like a very nice Australian." An Australian girl, arriving in London for the first time, was astonished that the homeward-bound city workers, streaming into Charing Cross railway station, were not all like the "guardee" aides-de-camp at Government House, from whom she had formed her idea of the typical Englishman.

At least this was more flattering than the way many English form their idea of the typical Australian, which they do from the more unfortunately conspicuous of our countrymen. The great majority of these, who are simple, quiet, friendly people, they ignore as not characteristically Australian. It would be as sensible to take a dishonest barrow-boy in the Mile End Road, who after all is an Englishman, as a characteristic one. These misunderstandings are inevitable in a family, and with greater mutual knowledge they are decreasing.

One most valuable effect of the Queen's visit will be to turn the eyes of the people of Britain to Australia, to awaken a fresh interest in our country, and to give them a better idea of its reality. There will certainly be many films made of the Royal Progress, which will not only reveal the beauties of the country and the high standard of civilisation of Australia, but will also emphasise the fact that she is united to Britain by allegiance to the same throne, and that we are in this, as well as in our blood, members of the same family.

This chapter began with a consideration of the past. It may be permissible to end it with a glance to the future. Assuming that our scientists and politicians between them allow us to survive, the material future of Australia, with her great natural riches, must be magnificent, but we are more concerned here with the sentiment of the people,

## *The People*

how their spirit will develop to give them a noble place in history, as exponents of civilisation, and by civilisation of course one does not mean mere wealth and technical achievement but the fruits of creative imagination.

Those periods and places which have left mankind its greatest legacies have had little technical achievement—the Athens of Socrates, the Holy Land, and the Italy of the Renaissance. There is no reason to believe that these great flowerings of the human spirit have come to an end. It is possible that any country in the world may be the scene of the next, and it is most likely to be a new country, where the soil is still virgin. We have seen that our cultural roots are in the old world, but they need not remain there, and it is said that transplanted stock is the best. What that old culture transplanted into our virgin soil may produce is a subject for the most optimistic speculation.

It is interesting to note that the larger inhabited part of Australia is in those latitudes in the Southern Hemisphere which in the Northern produced the great civilisations mentioned above, the latitudes between gross tropical luxuriance and the austerity of the north. As Ford Madox Ford has pointed out, this belt of culture extends to the far east, along the great trade route, the belt of climate identical with that of the southern half of Australia. It is the climate in which the eye is stimulated and the body is free. When one realises that in the short time of her settlement Australia has produced such a high proportion of painters and musicians, and that she has such a fresh and enthusiastic feeling for the arts, it seems almost certain that she has before her a cultural future of amazing brilliance.

Incidentally, as well as our climate, we have in common with those lands which have so enriched mankind, the fact that we are a wine-growing country. There does seem to be something mystical in the influence of the vine. Its pattern is woven all through our literature and round the heart of our religion. It changes its character with the terrain and in a way perhaps that corresponds with the change in human character, and we might do well to watch the developments of our vineyards.

If these ideas are too fanciful, we have other grounds for optimism. The visitor arriving to-day from Britain cannot help being struck by the vitality and frequent beauty of the young people in the street. With the sea and the sun, the high vivid sky and these splendid young men and women, we have all the raw material of Greece, but their age-long secretions are immensely richer. There is no conceivable reason why

### *Their Link With Britain*

in time they should not blossom into an equal but entirely different culture on their new terrain. The parent may be able to remain indifferent to his children, but not when they have reached the heights of achievement, and it is likely that in years to come the eyes of Britain will turn towards Australia in admiration and pride.